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ABSTRACT

A study examined the issues and experiences of 89 women teachers, head teachers, and girls in and out of school in two contrasting Ghanaian cultural contexts. Data were collected via life history interviews, analyzed, and presented around three domains: culture of the home; relationship between culture and the economy, and culture of the school. Findings indicated that the home domain was shaped by issues of kinship, descent, and the practice of fostering. Cultural values of elders, attitudes toward knowledge, women's role in society, and expectations of the economic value of schooling influenced girls' educational experiences. The economic domain operated at two levels. At the macro level, Ghana exemplified the impact of structural adjustment policies on marginalized people now facing increased educational and health service costs. At the micro level of the home and extended family, the girl was often the sole breadwinner needing to develop coping strategies to balance school with employment. In the culture of the school, many children did or learned little of value. Issues of attitude to knowledge, teaching methods, and language policy constrained reform efforts. The teacher's life was hard; many perceived their profession as having low status. Positive school experiences for the child included being well taught in literacy and numeracy skills, seeing successful women teachers as role models, and avoiding excessive corporal punishment. Policy implications were determined for home, the economy, and school. (Appendixes include three life history interviews, survey instruments, and 87 references.) (YLB)

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ED 419 130

EDUCATION RESEARCH

GIRLS AND BASIC EDUCATION: A CULTURAL ENQUIRY

Series No. 23

David Stephens

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EDUCATION RESEARCH

GIRLS AND BASIC EDUCATION: A CULTURAL ENQUIRY

David Stephens
University of Sussex
Centre for International Education

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Executive Summary

This study attempts to do three things: first to provide an argument for acknowledging and using the cultural dimension in educational development, second to put the case for a culturally more appropriate research methodology; and third to address the issue of access and gender in schooling within a cultural framework.

Specifically the study examines the issues and experiences of women teachers and girl drop-outs from school in two contrasting Ghanaian cultural contexts.

Using predominantly life history interviews the experiences of women and girls are examined within the inter-relating domains of home, economy, and school. An effort is made in the analysis to locate the experiences of women and girls within policy and research frameworks, with particular attention given to recent efforts by Government and the Donor community to improve educational provision for girls.

In general terms the research argues that greater acknowledgement be given to the cultural framework within which educational development occurs and that more attention be accorded the inter-relationship of Home, School and Economy as domains of enquiry and intervention.

The domain of the Home is for many one shaped by issues of kinship, descent and the practice of fostering. The cultural values of elders, particularly the support of the father towards a daughter's schooling, are crucial in determining the quantity and quality of schooling a girl receives. Attitudes towards knowledge, the role of females in society and the expectations of the economic value of schooling all impact on the girls educational experiences.

The economic domain operates at two levels. At the macro Ghana is a good example of the impact of structural adjustment policies upon the marginalised now facing increased educational and health service costs. At the micro level of the home and the extended family the research indicates that in many homes the girl herself is the sole breadwinner required to develop coping strategies which will balance school with employment.

The world of the school is one where for many children little is achieved in terms of doing anything or learning much that is of value. Attention to the culture of the classroom reveals a situation where issues of attitude to knowledge, teaching methods and language policy constrain efforts to implement reform. The life of the teacher is still very hard with many perceiving their profession possessing low status within the eyes of the community. For the child, positive school experiences include being well taught in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, in seeing successful women teachers as role models, and in the avoidance of excessive corporal punishment.

The study concludes with an overview of cultural issues determining the educational experiences of those interviewed and in suggesting implications for policy makers at national and local level.

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1. Introduction

In 1992 the Ghana Ministry of Education in collaboration with the local UNICEF office initiated an action research project, "for equity improvement in primary schooling" (Research report-draft. Unpublished 1993). Using a largely quantitative approach, the team of researchers collected a wide range of data from seven geographically representative areas of the country. The report writers undertook some preliminary analysis of the data and came to a number of conclusions concerning issues of girls, non-enrolment and drop-out e.g. that family factors such as the effect of broken homes or non-enrolment was important in all types of schools surveyed.

The draft report concluded with a suggestion that further research be carried out,

> *"a more focussed study in a couple of districts which would be more ethnographic than the current one deploying qualitative methods to the full to try and understand the complex inter-relation between all the factors that have been proposed as causes of drop-out and the variety of educational provision being offered for children" (GES/UNICEF 1993)*

This research is a result of that suggestion, though it owes its origins and development to a number of other factors too.

In 1994, the principal researcher took unpaid leave from his university position, and was appointed an education adviser for the Overseas Development Administration in Ghana (working as part of the Support for Teacher Education Project (STEP) team based at the University College of Education at Winneba and at Accra).

With an interest in qualitative and culturally-sensitive research, and with a professional brief to assist in building up research capacity at Winneba, the research project began to take shape.

Initially the idea was to pick up from where the GES/UNICEF research had left off in 1993 and to carry out, 'a more focused study' of girl drop-outs in two or more districts, one perhaps in the North of the country where access issues had been identified as acute, and the South, perhaps Winneba-Town, where the situation seemed better.

Eventually two locations were chosen for the study: Tamale and Laribanga village in the Northern region, the latter singled out by UNICEF for its problems in attracting and keeping girls in school; and Winneba, a Southern university town, home for much of the time to the principal researcher and the indigenous team who would carry out the

research in that area (the Northern case study being carried out by the principal researcher and a local researcher working from the Tamale Institute of Cross-Cultural Studies).

It soon became apparent that the research would not only address questions of gender and access to schooling but would try to do so in a way that was appropriate and sensitive to the cultural milieux under investigation.

A case study approach was therefore adopted and life history of women teachers and girls was selected as the major research tool. The research would attempt to answer the following questions:

1) Why do some children, particularly girls, fail to enrol and/or drop out of school during their basic education?
2) What are the contextual and educational factors responsible for non-enrolment and drop-out?
3) How far do the life histories of women and girls explain and provide solutions to the problem being studied?
4) What intervention strategies and agents of change can we identify at school and community level to solve the problem?
5) To what extent is the problem essentially different within two contrasting areas of one country?
6) To what extent can we develop culturally-sensitive research methodologies and methods in our work in educational development?

Working in two teams – one in the North, the other in the South – research data was collected from clusters of primary schools via life history interviews with 89 women teachers, head teachers, and from girls in and out of school. Six Ghanaian languages were used in the interviewing – English, Twi, Hausa, Dagomba, Gonja and Kamara (the language exclusive to the village of Laribanga) by the research team who were all experienced primary school teachers, being able to speak one or more of these languages.

Secondary data on the broad question of primary school quality and on the more focused issue of gender and access to schooling was also collected from published sources and from the archives of aid donors and the non-governmental organisations working in the country.

The data is analysed and presented around three domains : the culture of the home; the relationship between culture and the economy; and the culture of the school.

The research team felt from the beginning that the research report should not be 'just another survey' telling us why girls drop out of school, but rather that it should try and paint a picture of the complex world inhabited by real people with real and sometime contradictory motives. As such space has been given to the 'voices' of those interviewed and to an attempt to ground the experiential data in a broader context of the domain under investigation.

Though the particular school names have been retained, the individual teachers, headteachers and girls are indicated only by their initials.

The report consists of eight sections: the first, the introduction, is followed by a review of theoretical issues concerned with the inter-relationship of 'culture' and 'education' and 'development'. The third section then considers the rationale for employing a qualitative methodology and contains a brief discussion of the advantages (and disadvantages!) of using culturally-sensitive research approaches. The rationale and design of the study is also outlined.

The fourth, fifth and sixth sections present and discuss the findings centred around the three domains of: home, the economy and the school. Each section is divided into two parts, the first presenting broad, contextual material drawn largely from the secondary source material, the second from the experiences of those interviewed.

The report ends with a concluding section drawing together issues raised and indicating ways forward. Finally a bibliography and a number of appendices are provided.

2. Theoretical Issues: Culture in Education and Development

2.1 Introducing a conceptual framework

We are coming to the end of the United Nations World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-97). The decade has four aims: to enrich cultural identities; to broaden participation in cultural life; to promote international cultural cooperation; and to acknowledge the dimension of development.

This fourth dimension – the relationship between culture and, in this case, **educational** development – provides a fundamental underpinning of this study.

The observance of this decade is evidence of a growing awareness of the vital importance of the cultural dimension in any human, societal or development effort (UNESCO, 1991). Culture, if important to this effort, is especially so in the area of education where great opportunities exist to,

> *"unlock the potentials of individuals for a fuller life, not just economically but also culturally and socially" (ibid.)*

The education of girls is a particularly cultural matter, especially so in a country like Ghana. So also is the researching of the problem and the searching for solutions.

Culture, Education and **Development** are complex and problematic concepts shaped by historical and ideological forces. They also depend for meaning on context and the various purposes and interpretations provided by the writer in the development of a conceptual framework.

Broadly, we are engaged in an enterprise in which issues of gender and schooling will be interpreted from a cultural perspective. The substance or 'content' of the investigation will be viewed within a framework determined by the interplay of our three concepts. How we carry out our investigation, it is argued, is also equally part of our cultural enterprise and will be explained in section three which deals with methodological issues.

2.2 The Concept of Culture

Given the obvious centrality of culture in our daily lives it is a little curious to find it being referred to as 'the forgotten dimension' (Verhelst 1987) and the 'neglected concept' (Smith and Bond,1993; Thomas, 1994). Culture in education and

development seems to have come onto the stage rather late in the day and at a time of crisis in the worlds of development theory and Aid.

It is not as if the study of culture is in anyway 'new', rather it seems that in the developments of the concepts itself, and particularly its application to the fields of education and development , much of its utility has been lost. Robert Klitgaard, (1994) in his paper, "Taking Culture into Account: from 'Let's' to 'How'" puts it well,

> *"If culture should be taken into account and people have studied culture scientifically for a century or more, why don't we have well developed theories, practical guidelines, and close professional links between those who study culture and those who make and manage development policy?" (Klitgaard, 1994, p89)*

Much of what has been written about the term 'culture' (and there has been an awful lot) seems to agree that there are two dimensions to the concept:

First that culture exists on both an individual and social level, being concerned with what particular individuals think, learn and do and also with what a society considers important or meaningful.

Second that culture as a concept has come to relate to both the desirable e.g. ideas of **kultur** and 'civilisation' in the 1840's and the descriptive, current 'value-free' use of the term much in favour with sociologists and anthropologists.

If culture is about individuals and societies and the way such people and groupings are described and evaluated, it is concerned surely also with ideas and beliefs held by those individuals, personally and collectively?

In 1990 the Dutch Centre for the Study of Education in Developing countries (CESO) produced a, "Position Paper on Culture, Education and Productive Life in Developing Countries", in which they argued that the concept of culture is more that Ralph Linton's 1964 "configuration of learned behaviour" arguing that it is fundamentally ideational, culture not being "behaviour and customs" but the ideas which are used to shape behaviour and customs" (CESO, 1990).

Culture, then, is knowledge: a system of shared ideas, concepts, rules and meaning that underlie and are expressed in the ways that people live (Keesing, 1981).

Thierry Verhelst (1987) writing from a grassroots NGO development perspective extends this ideational view by suggesting that culture as a concept must not only be descriptive but useful. For him it is centrally concerned with problem-solving and the "original solutions" human beings generate to deal with "problems the environment sets

them". Verhelst, like the CESO authors, take culture to be very much a concept embodying change, empowerment and the process of decision-making.

Culture is also, of course, intertwined with language be it the day to day modes of communication of the rural people of Northern Ghana or the Aid-speak of the fax-machines and mobile telephones in the offices of Accra. Brian Bullivant makes a brave attempt to present a comprehensive definition of culture embracing all the aspects discussed so far:

> *"Culture is a patterned system of knowledge and conception embodied in symbolic and non-symbolic communication modes which a society has evolved from the past, and progressively modified augments to give meaning to and cope with the present and anticipated future problems of its existence" (Bullivant, 1981 p3)*

Culture is therefore concerned with two things:

a) the knowledge and ideas that give meaning to the beliefs and actions of individuals and societies.

b) the ideational tool which can be used to describe and evaluate that action.

Culture, then is both **about** what people think and do and how we **describe** and **evaluate** those beliefs and actions.

2.3 The Culture Concept in Development

In 1982 UNESCO organised a World Conference on Cultural Policies (MONDIACULT) at Mexico City at which the concepts and definitions of culture and development were formulated.

Those attending the conference were concerned that the concept of culture in the 1960's and '70's had come to refer only to the restricted sense of a nation's products: its art and literature and what distinguished one society from another.

Since the conference UNESCO has broadened the definition, defining culture as, 'the whole complex of distinctive spiritual material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs"(UNESCO, 1982).

What is interesting about this definition is that though it is broader than the view of culture as books and buildings it still conceives culture as a feature or component of

social life rather than something intimately bound up with what individuals and groups **do** within a society.

FIGURE A - Six indicators of the cultural dimension of relationships within a development project (UNESCO, 1995)

1. **The relationship with time** - e.g. perceptions of the future and the tradition in collective representation. Relationship of time to an individual's economic situation, organisation of the day, seasons, etc.

2. **The relationship with the environment** - e.g. perceptions of nature, use of scarce resources, dominating/dominant environment; spatial perceptions; relationship of individual to different modes of life (sedentary or nomadic).

3. **The relationship with the body and food** - e.g. perceptions of sickness and death, attitudes to fertility, sexual distribution of labour, hierarchy.

4. **The relationship of individual to the social group** - e.g. notions of identity (family, tribe, ethnic, group, nation), relationship of project objectives to group norms and aims.

5. **The relationship with the hierarchy and power** - e.g. perception of authority, the decision-making process, relations between individuals and administration, hierarchical relations at work etc.

6. **The relationship with economy and innovation** - e.g. perceptions of money and goods, perceptions of work (e.g. to survive, grow richer); attitudes to innovation, knowledge and initiatives.

In terms of development this still presents a problem of 'culture' being viewed as something that is acted upon (and which in turn is promoted or defended) rather than something that is as much part of the doing as it is the receiving.

The World Bank who addressed the question of culture at an International Conference in Washington on April, 1992, concurred with the UNESCO definition of culture adding, interestingly, that though "culture matters",

> *"we are a long way from achieving a synthesis between the rigor of current economic analysis and the intuitive and qualitative character of much of the current work on culture and development, or the localized quantitative work done in some anthropological field investigations" (Serageldin, 1994 p2)*

Though this says as much about the Bank as it does qualitative or anthropological research, it does reveal a problem which lies at the heart of the debate to accord greater importance to the cultural nature of development, namely the pre-dominance of economic models of development which are not only perceived of as being "value free" and a-cultural but also as unquestionable.

The reference to the 'localized' nature of 'current work on culture and development' reveals another problem concerning the validity and generalisability of studies which are essentially local and of an in-depth character. A solution – and one adopted by this study – is to ground 'local' case studies within broader scenarios that are framed locally and nationally, thereby counterpointing the rich qualitative picture with the larger view which draws its strength from a wide range of quantitative and qualitative studies. This question will be explored in more depth in section three.

2.4 Culture and Economics in Development

Underpinning all development issues in Ghana is the question of poverty. To understand the cultural domain of poverty and its influence on education it is necessary to explore, briefly, the relationship between economics, culture and development.

A recent international conference at the University of London's Institute of Education tackled the theme of, "Partnerships in Education and Development: tensions between Economics and Culture" (24-26 May, 1995).

Three major 'tensions' were identified:

First the economist and anthropologist who essentially see the world differently, a vision that shapes not only their perception of their own discipline but it would seem the work of others;

Second the strongly held perception that economics – and some would say development – are rational, value –free, enterprises carried out in an a-cultural environment;

Third the predominance of economics over anthropology as a discipline in development.

A result of this dichotomy has been the creation of two worlds of enquiry: the macro and economic viewed largely through the statistical survey and which is often urban-oriented; and the micro, anthropological picture sustained by 'thick' description Geertz, J.P. & La Compte, M.D. (1984) gathered from repeated visits to the home and village.

A more productive line of enquiry is to view the distinction between economics and culture as analytically false. Stirrat, in his paper, "Economics and Culture: notes towards an Anthropology of Economics", given at the same London conference argues that,

> *" Economics, both in terms of what economists do (theoretical economics, economic analysis, etc.) and in terms of what they normally study (production exchange and consumption), is cultural activity" (Stirrat, 1995)*

As we shall see when looking at the issue of poverty in relation to girls and schooling in Ghana it is necessary to view the issue from both the macro and micro and to recognise that at both levels are questions of priorities, values and decision-making.

The contribution of the economic anthropologist to the world of development and aid is sadly undervalued (though it is interesting that the Society for Economic Anthropology based in the United States of America has about four hundred members) and may have something to do with the diverse paths taken by the two disciplines and the fact that agencies such as the World Bank are largely staffed by economists of the more classical kind.

Richard Wilk, in his excellent introduction to the subject of 'Economics and Cultures' (Wilk, R 1996) illustrates how culture and economics can contribute to development in the sort of questions it asks:

> *"How do farming families stay together and deal with poverty? How do people organize together and struggle successfully against the rich and powerful? What happens to local cultures faced with global corporations, global telecommunication, and computers in the workplace?" (Wilk, R 1996)*

For us the questions are similar: how do families in Ghana cope with poverty, particularly when faced with the direct costs of schooling? What priorities do parents place on the economic value of educating girls? And at the macro level: what impact have structural adjustment programmes had on the development of primary education in the rich and not-so-rich areas of Ghana?

2.5 Culture and Education: the chalkface of Development

The relationship between culture and schooling is now well understood (see for example Stenhouse, L, 1967). The culture of schooling within the context of developing countries, however, throws up fewer studies.

One of interest, however, has emerged from the work on school effectiveness and the management of change and institutional development carried out by the Norwegian Per Dalin and his colleagues at IMTEC.

Dalin, like others, recognises both the primacy of schooling as a transmitter of culture and the way schools generate not only a culture of their own but the constraints and opportunities to becoming "learning organisations".

He suggests that school culture can be viewed at operating at three levels (quoting Hodgkinson, 1983):

1) **the transrational** – where values are conceived as metaphysical based on beliefs, ethical codes and moral insights.

2) **the rational** – where values are grounded within a social context of norms, customs, expectations and standards, and depend on collective justification.

3) **the subrational** – where values are experienced as personal preferences and feelings; rooted in emotion, basic, direct, affective and are behaviouristic in character. They are basically asocial and amoral.

They go on to suggest that few schools are clear about their values at the transrational level citing as exceptions the Steiner or Montessori schools which consciously set out to educate children in a particular way. Rather, they argue, it is at the rational level where most schools express their values through curriculum objectives, norms, rules, daily practices etc. At the sub-rational level it is suggested individual teachers can play an important part in mediating values and norms at a personal level. To what extent, teachers in a more collectivist cultural setting do this is interesting and it is something we will return to when looking at a cohort of teachers, and pupils, lives in our case studies.

Values and norms, therefore, are manifest at the individual level, the group level (e.g. in the classroom), the organisational level i.e. at the school and the society levels.

'School culture' Per Dalin and his colleagues suggest is a complex phenomena appearing at their three levels and in the various relationships between the individual and the larger groups to which he or she belongs.

This kind of analysis is important for it helps us identify the loci of change e.g. do we want to 'develop' individual teachers or try to effect change at the school or community level? Understanding what constitutes school culture is also important in that it tells us about which factors promote and hinder change within a particular school or broadly educational setting. Finally, a great deal of evidence suggests that for any meaningful educational development to occur it must be rooted in the school - in the head teacher's office or, depending on the nature of the change, the individual classroom.

The relationship between culture and schooling is nowhere better illustrated than in the debates concerning school effectiveness. The cultural-relatedness of what is or is not an effective school is well illustrated in a recent (and very useful) work by Ward Heneveld (1994). In brief, Heneveld suggests that what we currently understand by effectiveness i.e. student testing be broadened to embrace a network of inter-related factors - sixteen in all - which can be grouped into 'supporting inputs' e.g. strong parental and community support; 'student outcomes' e.g. social and academic skills, enabling conditions such as effective leadership; and the larger contextual factors: cultural economic, political etc. that frame the whole enterprise. He represents his conceptual framework in the following way:

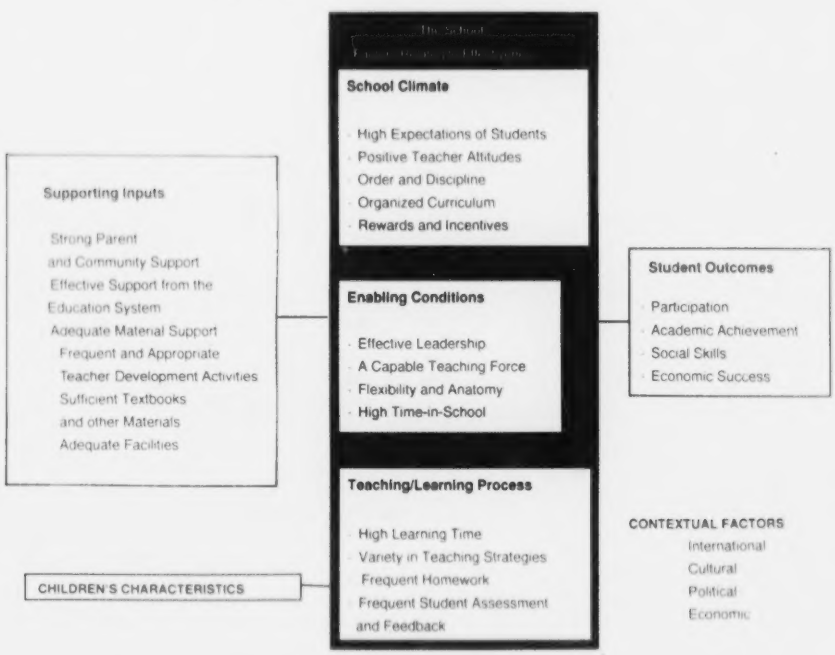


Figure B1 Conceptual framework: factors that determine school effectiveness
Source: Henveld (1994)

If we analyse the clusters of factors for a moment we see that in fact they are really sets of criteria for what the author considers "effective" at a particular place within the education system. All the factors or criteria are, to quote Lawton, "selections from a culture".

Factors such as 'variety in teaching strategies' or 'frequent homework' selected to represent effective teaching/learning processes come not only from research - much of it conducted in Western classrooms (girls in most Third world countries experiencing 'frequent homework' at the well or the farm rather than with their school books) but from cultural contexts which accord different values to not only the nature and purpose of schooling but the role of the child in society. This is not to deny that Heneveld's factors are not important, but rather to suggest that the 'cultural' is not just a contextual factor as illustrated but a determining feature of the factors selected and the language used to describe them.

The cultural nature of development, economics and schooling presents, as we have said before, a number of concerns which need to be addressed if we are to make good use of the culture factor in educational development.

2.6 Culture in Education and Development: a New Language of Debate

As we draw to the close of this section it seems useful to identify a number of key 'basic facts' that we need to keep in mind when considering the incorporation of culture in education and development work:

- First, that any consideration of the term 'culture' must acknowledge both the descriptive i.e. what people think and do and the normative i.e. what values are attached to that description.

- Second, that when we view the term 'culture' in its development context it is important to remember that culture is both the product 'acted upon' and the process by which those actions occur. What we are saying is that, as with economics, development is essentually a cultural activity.

- Third, that educationists and development workers wishing to make greater use of culture should not underestimate the decisive role played by economic and political dimensions in their work.

- Fourth that at the school level culture operates at a number of levels - the transrational, rational and sub-rational - and between the various individuals and groups concerned. The very language of the debate on issues such as school effectiveness or curriculum development is as cultural as is the context in which the debate occurs.

- Lastly, that in using (and misusing) culture we need to take seriously the difficulties in both clarifying the complex and yet avoiding the oversimplification of what is a major yet potentially rewarding task.

3. Methodological Issues

3.1 Introduction

If Culture is indeed both knowledge and ideas that give meaning to beliefs and actions and the ideational tool that describes and evaluates that action, then it is appropriate for research itself to be viewed as a particularly significant area of human activity.

In developing a series of questions to frame the enquiry, attention was given to the wish to develop culturally-sensitive research methodologies and methods which would not only serve the research well in the gathering of good quality data but would advance our knowledge of how best to investigate educational and social problems, particularly in a setting different from the principal researchers.

This meant paying particular attention **at the outset** to the broad approach or methodology that was to be used and later to the range of techniques or methods that would be developed to gather the data. Finally, thought would be given to who would be involved in the research and to the ownership and dissemination of the results.

In trying to carry out research which is both of high quality and yet culturally-sensitive it is possible to identify four major questions:

- What, in terms of cultural factors need to be identified in the content and methodology of the research?
- Where, in terms of locus of control, will the research and publication be carried out?
- Why, in terms of linkage to development goals, will the research be done?
- Who, in terms of personnel will be involved and to what extent will the research be empowering and reflexive for the researcher and researched?

3.2 Methodology: towards a more culturally appropriate approach

The writer's own extensive research in a number of African cultural settings (detailed elsewhere in Vulliamy, et al. 1990) and his interest in the promotion of qualitative research gives weight to the view that it is within qualitative research methodology we

will find a more suitable way forward. In particular we can identify six common characteristics of this approach which also guided the Ghana study:

a) The focus on **meanings** and the attempts to understand the culture of those being studied predisposes researchers to work as far as possible in natural settings (Denzin, 1971). In terms of methods this suggests, for example, a preference for participant observation rather than experiments under artificial conditions, and preference for informal and less standardised interviews rather than for more standardised and formal ones. The use of life history as we shall see, also attracts as a particularly meaningful research method.

b) Rather than testing preconceived hypotheses culturally-sensitive research aims to generate hypotheses and theories **from the data** that emerge, in an attempt to avoid the imposition of a previous, and possibly culturally inappropriate, frames of reference (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). There are two important implications of this. First, it implies a greater degree of flexibility concerning research design and data collection over the duration of the research project; and secondly, it implies that the process of analysis occurs simultaneously with the process of data collection.

Though the Ghana study was guided by the six research questions reported in the introduction the continual process of analysis played a significant part in steering the on-going collection of data and in the generation of ***meaningful*** *results.*

c) In focusing on the processes of social interaction, qualitative research involves the **ongoing collection of data** rather than collection of material at discrete points in the research process. Culturally appropriate research in development is therefore more likely to be concerned with the process of implementation than with innovation outcomes. *In the case of the Ghana study researching two field sites also meant that lessons and refinements learnt from one could be applied to the other.*

d) Qualitative, culturally-appropriate research is **holistic**, in the sense that it attempts to provide a contextual understanding of the complex interrelationship of causes and consequences that affect human behaviour (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984). As stated earlier the focus needs to be more on context as research environment rather than context as background to the study. A consequence of this holistic emphasis is that qualitative research within the

development field tends to incorporate a wide variety of specific research techniques, even within one research project. As we shall examine later a case can be made for increased use of research methods that relate specifically to patterns of local knowledge and the transmission of cultural meanings (Vulliamy, et al. 1990).

In Ghana this meant giving priority to the initial selection of research sites and the gathering of relevant contextual data. Becoming sensitive to and grounded in the contexts of the research sites involved an intensive initial period (of about six months) during which regular visits were made to both areas, previous researches conducted nationally and locally were consulted, and key individuals with an interest in the location were approached and listened to.

e) The validity or explanatory power of qualitative research depends on the researcher's ability to understand the relationship between macro- and micro-analytical levels of data collected, and to establish cross-cultural comparisons and contrasts. To a certain extent this resolves the earlier problem of objectification.

By choosing two field sites of very different characters - one in the South of the country in a more prosperous, largely Christian and matrilineal community; the other in the poorer, Northern community, Islamic and patrilineal it was intended that cross-cultural comparisons and contrasts could be drawn at a national level.

This micro-level case study data is also counter-pointed against macro background data drawn from international and national studies, secondary source literature, and donor community documentation.

f) The goals of educational researchers using qualitative methods are best served by using approaches which connect explicitly macro- and micro-structural levels of data collection and analysis from an interdisciplinary perspective which can assist policy makers and practitioners. (Trueba, et al. 1990)

In Ghana three domains of enquiry were established early on: the communal/home; the economic; and the educational/school. In order to describe those domains literature was reviewed pertaining to a number of relevant academic disciplines ranging from the classical anthropological (e.g. 'The Lions of Dagbon') to the economic (e.g. John Toye's 1991 study of the impact of structural adjustment on the Ghana Economy). Material was also drawn from

newspapers, unpublished student theses, and the welter of documentation produced by NGO and bi-lateral aid organisations.

3.3 Methods: using life histories to tell us more about real life in developing countries

3.3.1 Introduction

The importance and value of life history and biography as a research method is now well established in educational research, particularly in the Western, so-called developed world. Life history and biography have been used to good effect for example in an understanding of individual-community relations at a time of change (Bertaux, 1981), in the organisation of individual life (Mandelbaum, 1973), and more specifically in the interplay between teachers, individual identities and the socio-historical context in which they work (Goodson 1980, Ball & Goodson, 1985; Woods 1981, 1984, 1987). Essentially life history research concerns the relationship between two inter-dependent worlds: that of the individual with their unique **life story** and that of the past, present and future contextual world through which the individual travels. Life story is, "the story we tell about our life" (Goodson, 1992) while **life history** is that life story, "located within its historical context" (ibid.). Given the potential utility of these methods to illuminate the realities of people's lives, particularly at times of great change, it is surprising to discover how little impact they have had on educational research in the developing world. There seems, however, to be the stirrings of an interest in exploring the use of these techniques in Third World settings (see Osler's (1997) recent paper for example).

An aim of this research project was to present a case for greater use of biography and life history in educational research and to describe and evaluate the use of these methods in a small scale research project in one national setting.

3.3.2 Nature of life history

What defines a life history has been a matter of some debate (see Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995) though it seems possible now to identify a broadly accepted set of characteristics:-

- It is a qualitative research method which like the closely allied method, narrative enquiry, focuses on, "the individual, the personal nature of the research process, a practical orientation and an emphasis on subjectivity" (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995).

- It is a mix of 'life story' as told by individuals to the researcher and, what Goodson 1992, calls 'genealogies of context' which in turn become a 'life history'.

- It is essentially a personal type of research enquiry with priority for success being given to the establishment of rapport between researched and researcher. The dialogical, discoursive nature of life history and narrative work raises a number of questions, both ethical and ideological particularly when involving outside researchers investigating problems in the developing world.

- It is concerned with 'voice' and 'ownership'; emphasis given throughout from design to publication to what the individual researched has to say, how it is said, and the meaning made by the speaker to what has been said. As such it has great potential for imbuing the research process with a liberating, democratic ethos.

These characteristics, in turn, give rise to two parallel sets of tensions:

- **first in the balance that needs to be struck between the individual and the contextually-situated nature of their individual experience**. Recognising that 'no man is an island' means that a major task in carrying out life history research is to present a view of larger, macro-issues through the lens of an individual's life experiences.

Bertaux (1981) suggests that:

> *"each individual does not totalise directly a whole society, he totalises it by way of the mediation of his immediate social context, the small groups of which he is a part" (p. 23)*

If one, therefore, views individual life experiences as always in relation to the immediate social environment (which is particularly so in the developing world) **and** in relation to comparative experiences of those in similar situations it is possible to present an analysis which is both particular and universal. As we shall see when discussing the life histories of teachers and students in our case study, data can be presented in two ways: the individual teacher's life in relation to her immediate social environment and a composite analysis of groups of teachers and children's lives drawn from larger geographical areas. A particular strength of life history is, therefore, its potential to bestride the micro-macro interface than most other forms of qualitative research.

- **Second in the balance the subjective and objective.** In many ways life history and narrative methods reveal both the strengths and challenges of these forms of qualitative enquiry. These who use life history have no problems with extolling its strengths.

Ayers writing in Hatch & Wisniewski (1995) summarises the pro-views well:

> *"Life history and narrative approaches are person centred, unapologetically subjective. Far from a weakness, the voice of the person, the subject's own account represents a singular strength. Life history and narrative are ancient approaches to understanding human affairs - they are found in history, folklore, psychiatry, medicine, music, sociology, economics and of course, anthropology. Their relative newness to us is a reminder of how often we tail behind" (p 118)*

As we shall see when analysing the data collected from the two case studies an attempt has been made to balance the contextual, background material with the 'voices' of the individuals interviewed; and to maintain equilibrium between 'objective' data - statistical information, survey reports, etc. - and the more personal 'subjective' accounts drawn from the respondents in the field.

3.3.3. Life history and the study of teachers' lives

Education is essentially concerned with what happens to people. Remembering this fact can guide us in making decisions about how to collect educational data and the purposes to which research should be put. There is a strong case to be made for research into policy and curriculum for example to take much greater cognizance of voices of teacher and pupils who daily experience the effects of decisions usually taken at a distance and by individuals at least once removed from the chalkface.

There seem to be at least four advantages in using life history in educational research:

Firstly by focusing on the lives of **women** teachers directly involved in the lives of their female charges, we are providing an antidote to the predominance of current research which tends to focus on the manager and administrator, notably those with power, access to decision making, and the prestigious 'voices' of the educational establishment (which often, though not always in Ghana, tend to be men).

Secondly, by understanding the individual teachers and pupils within a life history context we can identify significant moments and experiences which, in the **eyes of the respondents**, appear significant. Within that context and that level we can therefore suggest possible strategies for intervention.

Thirdly, we can give 'voice' to the **marginalised**, to the beginner female teacher at the chalkface, to the parent attempting to improve the lot of his daughter, and to the children themselves, bewildered by the problems of coping with factors often outside their control.

Finally, as Goodson, 1982, argues in his book 'Studying Teachers' Lives', a focus on the teacher and pupils in situ will generate much needed research into the **relationship of 'school life' and 'whole life'**, a relationship that seems to be central to the problem of girls moving into and out of school.

These advantages take on greater weight when we consider the situation of many teachers and pupils in the developing world. As we shall see next when considering cultural issues and life history research, a noted feature of most, if not all, education systems in the Third (and increasingly) First World is their authoritarian nature. Despite calls for decentralisation and 'participatory planning' most decisions affecting teachers and pupils are taken by senior, usually male officials in ministries in the capitals of the world. Teachers, and more so pupils, are expected to be obedient and implement policy decided elsewhere. With low teacher salaries, few resources, and poor means of communication, a tradition is easily established in which the teacher is disempowered and disinclined to take any part in the educational decision making process. What teachers and pupils do do though is develop support systems which mediate the demands of the above with the realities of classroom existence. Knowing about and making proper use of such knowledge can be brought about by life history research. Such data can also make some contribution to bridging the gulf between the macro, policy world of the capital city and the micro, classroom world where education is supposed to occur.

3.3.4 Life history and issues of culture

Reviewing the literature on life history and narrative research we are struck by the little that has been carried out in Third World settings. There are a number of reasons for this: the predominance of traditional empirical forms of research, the establishment of large teaching universities with little opportunities for research, and the recruitment of indigenous researchers by development agencies concerned only with macro, survey

style evaluations seem to be three. Though some good, qualitative research is now being carried out by doctoral students around the world, little serious effort is being made to promote the incorporation of small scale, qualitative studies into the political and financial agendas of Ministries of education and donor organisations.

An exception is the recently published research by Robert Serpell into 'the significance of schooling' in one Zambian community (1993). Significantly, sub-titled, 'Life-journeys in an African Society' Serpell well illustrates the interface between life history research and cultural life.

In an important appendix to his book, Serpell sets out his "reflexive triangle" which bring together the respective "cultures of interpretation" of author, subject, and audience (see figure below):

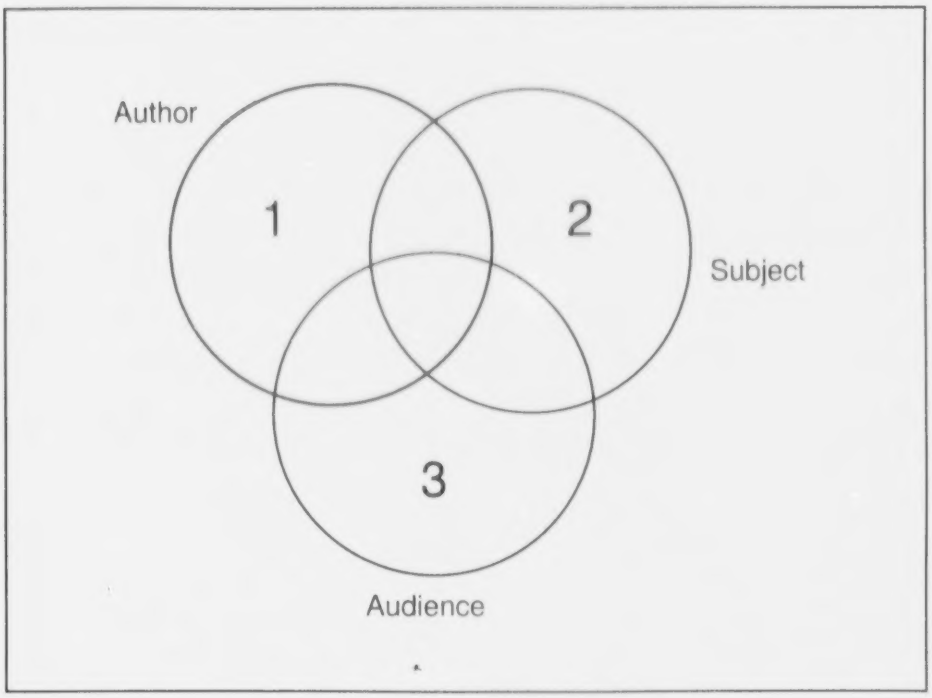


Figure B2 Cultures of interpretation (perspectives): the reflexive triangle (Serpell, 1993)

As Serpell says:

> *"We can identify three different roles which feature in the communication situation: the subject whose behaviour is to be explained, the author who proposes the explanation and the audience to whom the explanation is addressed" (p. 281)*

In his collection and analysis of the life histories or 'life journeys' of students from his Zambian community, Serpell sets out to explain the significance of schooling held by those represented in his reflexive triangle. He makes the important point that he is not only trying to explain how the author, say, views the educational values of his subjects i.e. school children but how the various parties to the explanation view **their own** values, perceptions, attitudes etc. This reflexive approach to the gathering of data means that 'culture' applies equally to the framing of the Zambian data as it does to experiences, knowledge and insights brought to the research from the outside.

As we shall see when analysing data collected through life histories in Ghana significant attention will be paid to the reflexive nature of the research process.

3.3.5. Life history and educational research in developing countries: problems and prospects

Edwards, reflecting on his work at Oxfam and the Save the Children Fund, recalls that agencies like his rely upon, "detailed historical and anthropological monographs, often based on oral testimony and life-history techniques" (Edwards, 1989).

It seems to us that life history is a particular research method which is not only well suited to cultural conditions in developing countries but fits well into a methodological paradigm that is both qualitative and action-oriented.

Central to the question of improving the quality of education in developing countries is surely the work of the teacher - it is on the quality of her involvement at education's point of delivery that so much hangs. It is the teacher, and the teacher trainer, who remain central to achievement in our educational endeavour (Goodson (ed.) 1992) and it is therefore, somewhat surprising that so little attention is given to these practitioners by researchers.

To overcome any disinclination to make use of this, and other more 'people-centred' research methods, any problems inherent in the particular technique need to be addressed.

Two major problems need to be faced: first, that by focusing on the teacher or group of teachers at local level we may be gaining a great deal of culturally rich material, particularly of a local kind but will gain little of the national or broader picture. We must not ignore therefore the contextual parameters which so substantially impinge upon and constantly restrict the teacher's life (Goodson, 1992). Secondly, there is a danger of unintentional dis-empowerment, we must be wary in other words of all give and no

take. Goodson and Walker (1990) suggest that by developing 'genealogies of context' we will produce research data that produces more of a 'complete picture' than an assortment of teacher biographies. Collaboration and an emphasis, as we have said earlier, on research environment, are therefore vital:

> *"Much of the work that is emerging on teachers' lives throws up structural insights which locate the teacher's life within the deeply structured and embedded environment of schooling. This provides a prime 'trading point' for the external researcher...Each see the world through a different prism of practice and thought. This valuable difference may provide the external researcher with a possibility to offer back goods in 'the trade'. The teacher/researcher offers data and insights, the external researcher, in pursuing glimpses of structure in different ways, may now also bring data and insights. The terms of trade, in short look favourable. In such conditions collaboration may at last begin" (Goodson and Walker, 1990)*

In taking up this approach we are emphasising two dimensions of cultural importance: that the teachers' life histories be told in their own words and in their own terms; and that these stories or biographies be embedded in genealogies of context.

This leads us on to consideration of our second proposal, that life histories be generally accorded greater value in the research process.

Martin Cortazzi (1993) at the University of Leicester has recently drawn attention to the importance of storytelling by teachers as a research method. His work is innovative in two ways. First, it shows how narratives can be analysed from a variety of perspectives (and for our purpose his section dealing with 'anthropological models of narrative' is invaluable). Second, he shows that by focusing on teachers **telling** we get back to the **knowing**, which in turn provides us with a rich supply of experiential data necessary for the improvement of classroom life.

A distinctive characteristic of a life history is its relationship to culture. When we talk of culture here we are not just referring to an ethnic group but to the way teachers as a cultural group "tell their own story". In listening to teachers talk about what is important to them we can distinguish between **what** is recounted, how it is narrated and what teachers **believe** about their story to be important. Finally it will be important to relate these stories to cultural and professional environments, and the overall action-oriented nature of the research.

3.4 The Research Project

3.4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is five-fold, first the purpose of the research is stated and the research questions are clearly identified; second background is given on the problem

of girls and Basic Education; thirdly the two case study contexts are briefly described; fourthly the way in which the research was carried out is outlined; and lastly principles and procedures relating to the analysis and presentation of the findings are discussed.

3.4.2 Research purpose

The purpose of the research is to gather data and develop solutions to the problem of why girls are not attending and dropping out of school in one African country.

The problem of non-enrolment and dropping out is investigated within the context of girls and women's life histories. These in turn are embedded in the cultural and institutional context of where the informants respectively live and teach/learn.

The research also explores the relationship that exists between what can be broadly be defined as culture and the research process. This is achieved by the overall methodological framing of the research and specific selection of research methods.

The research addresses the following questions.

i) Why do some children, particularly girls, fail to enrol and/or drop out of school during their basic education?

ii) What are the contextual and educational factors responsible for non-enrolment and drop-out?

iii) How far do the life histories of women and girls explain and provide solutions to the problem being studied?

iv) What intervention strategies and agents of change can we identify at school and community level to solve the problem?

v) To what extent is the problem essentially different within two contrasting areas of one country?

vi) To what extent can we develop culturally-sensitive research methodologies and methods in our work in educational development?

3.4.3. Background and Context

The aim of this section is to briefly place the proposed research in its international and national contexts and to relate it also to some preliminary research that has been conducted locally.

3.4.3.1. The International Context

The general case that girls and women are relatively educationally deprived is easy to demonstrate. Female enrolments lag behind boys in most developing countries.

Figure C:
Male and Female Gross Enrolment Ratios by Level of Education 1990 and Adult Literacy (Percentages)

	First Level		Second Level		Third Level		Adult Literacy	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Developing Countries	105 5	90 4	50 3	37 5	10 1	6 5	71 9	55 0
Sub Saharan Africa	73 5	59 9	21 2	13 8	2 8	1 0	59 0	36 1
Arab States	92 3	74 2	66 2	44 9	15 6	9 5	64 3	38 0
Latin America	111 4	107 2	55 7	59 6	19 3	18 2	86 4	83 0
Caribbean								
East Asia	124 6	114 9	58 7	47 7	7 3	4 9	85 7	66 4
Oceania								
South Asia	100 8	75 1	47 8	28 2	12 1	5 3	59 1	32 2

Source: UNESCO 1991 53 Table 3 2 26, Table 2 2

Though disparities in enrolments have been reducing at the first level they remain high in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States and South Asia. At the second and third levels progress towards more equal enrolment has been slower. Low enrolments are associated with lower GNP per capita and the association is stronger for countries with lower female enrolments (Behrman, 1991).

There is also a strong relationship between the incidence of low Gross Enrolment Ratios at primary level and relative under-enrolment of girls. Countries where female enrolment is low are also countries where overall gross enrolments are low (UNESCO, 1991). The bigger the disparity in enrolments between boys and girls the more likely it is that a smaller proportion of primary school children will be in school (Colclough with Lewin, 1993).

If access is a problem then drop out is equally worrying. There is evidence that drop out is higher for girls than for boys in the majority of African and Asian countries (UNESCO, 1991). Persistence rates to grade four for girls also pose serious problems for the educator concerned with issues of quality (Hawes and Stephens, 1990).

3.4.3.2. The National Context – Ghana

This picture is more or less reflected at a national level in Ghana, though , as expected, a closer look at enrolment and drop out rates as girls progress up the educational ladder reveal a number of complex and inter-related factors.

Figure C1: Enrolment by Sex and Grades in Basic and Secondary Education 1990/91 (approximate figures)

	Boys		Girls		
Grade	**Enrolment**	**%Total**	**Enrolment**	**%Total**	**Total**
P1	208,000	53%	181,000	47%	389,000
P2	180,500	54%	153,500	46%	334,000
P3	168,000	55%	138,000	45%	306,000
P4	155,000	56%	124,500	45%	279,000
P5	144,000	56%	112,500	44%	256,000
P6	136,000	57%	101,500	43%	237,500
Total	**991,500**	**55%**	**810,000**	**45%**	**1,802,000**
JSS1	127,000	58%	91,500	42%	218,500
JSS2	112,000	59%	77,000	41%	189,000
JSS3/M3	97,500	61%	63,500	40%	161,000
Total	**336,500**	**59%**	**232,000**	**41%**	**568,500**
SS1	34,000	68%	16,000	32%	50,000
SS2	27,000	65%	14,500	35%	41,500
SS3	24,000	66%	12,500	34%	36,500
SS4	22,000	67%	11,000	33%	33,000
SS5	18,500	68%	8,500	32%	27,000
L6	4,500	75%	1,500	25%	6,000
U6	4,000	76%	1,000	24%	5,000
Total	**134,000**	**67%**	**65,000**	**33%**	**199,000**
GRAND TOTAL	**1,462,000**	**57%**	**1,107,000**	**43%**	**2,569,000**

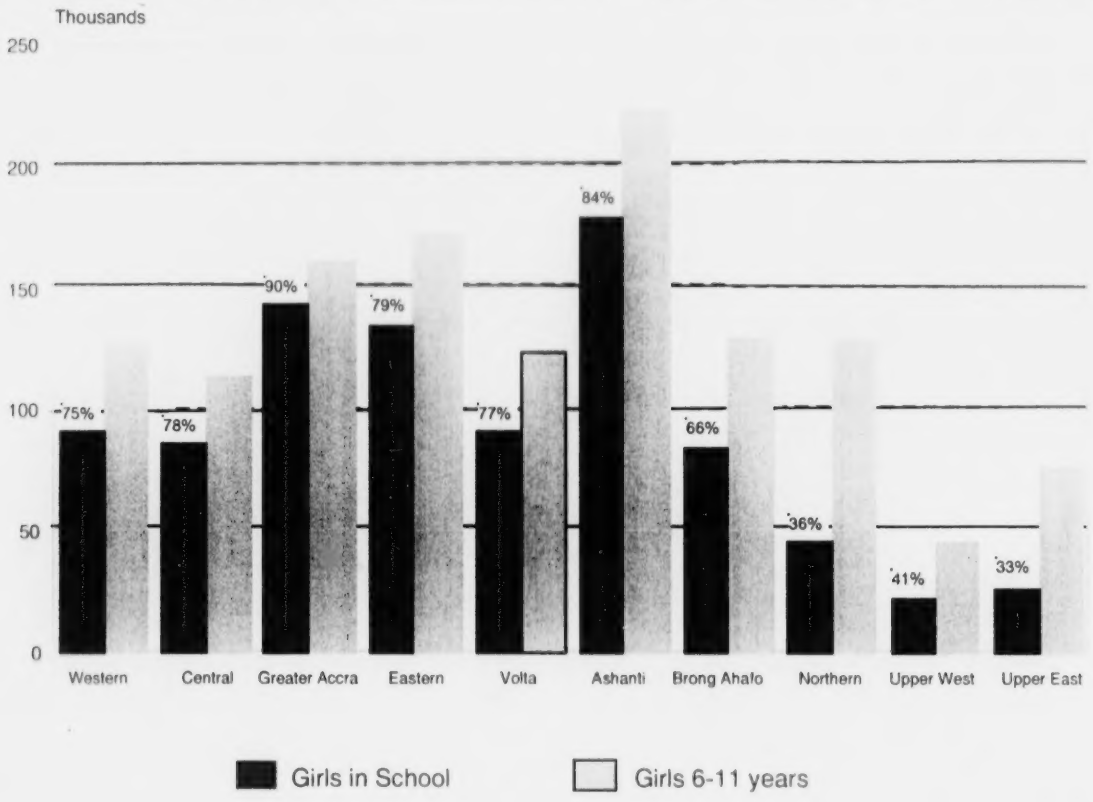


Figure C2: Girls in Primary School by region, 1991/92; Population, Enrolment and Enrolment Ratio

Gross enrolment rates for boys and girls attending primary school in the country were 77% in 1990 (80% in 1980). Disaggregating this by gender and by region reveals a more dramatic picture: 70% girls were enrolled in 1990 (71% in 1980) as opposed to 84% of boys (down from 89% in 1980) and regionally a large disparity in enrolment revealed 4% of girls dropping out in southern located Accra, the corresponding figure for the North being 20% (UNESCO, 1993).

Regional disparities and disparities within regions in respect of enrolment are also considerable. In the Greater Accra and Central Regions of the country, the gross enrolment rates is over 95% (including private schools) whereas it is only 43% in the Upper East Region. Gender disparities are greater in those regions too with low enrolment rates in the three northern regions. The girls' participation rate of under 40% there compares with the national average of 70% (Grieco et al, 1994).

Finally we can see a marked difference in what happens to a girl the further up the educational ladder she travels. The most recently available Government statistics reveal a significant reduction in the number of girls moving from the final year of primary six to Junior Secondary School. The following table is also notable for the disproportionate number of women teachers (particularly at secondary and teacher training levels) and the large number of untrained as opposed to trained teachers of both sexes, especially at kindergarten and primary levels.

Figure D:

Level/ Type	No. of Schools	Enrolment		Trained Teachers		Untrained Teachers	
		Girls	Boys & Girls	Females	Total	Females	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Pre-Primary/ Kindergarten	3,160	116,281	232,914	2,245	2,390	9,627	10,146
Primary	9,922	654,456	1,479,449	14,181	32,304	10,962	30,857
Mid/Cont.	5,151*	169,939	418,308	4,560	15,152	2,500	10,480
Jnr. Secondary	4,444*	84,782	207,033	2,834	12,123	330	2,773
Snr. Secondary	240	47,644	146,701	1,292	6,347	193	1,462
Teacher Training	45	7,536	16,974	231	1,004	3	11
Technical/ Vocational	27	3,157	17,560	85	734	45	445
Special Education	16	557	1,434	63	197	38	70
All	19,011	1,084,354	2,520,373	25,491	23,698	56,244	

Note: Two sets of figures are not additive. It may be noted that most of Middle Schools are having J.S.S. classes. Therefore, number of Middle Schools is included in Grand Total.

3.4.3.3 Preliminary research conducted locally

In 1992 the Ghana Ministry of Education in collaboration with the local UNICEF office initiated a piece of "action research for equity improvement in primary schooling" (Research report-draft. Unpublished 1993). Utilising a largely quantitative approach (in spite of the inclusion of the term 'action research' in its title) the team of researchers collected a wide range of data from seven geographically representative areas of Ghana. The main purpose of the exercise was to answer a number of key questions e.g. 'why do some children drop out of school during their basic education?' 'Which of these reasons are the most powerful?' and 'Where are the strategic points of intervention, both locally and nationally?'

Teachers, children and community leaders were asked, through interview, questionnaires and the building up of 'family' and 'school' profiles, a range of questions concerning specifically non-enrolment and drop out[1].

The research reports four main findings:

i that variation in reasons given for dropout and non-enrolment given by those interviewed relate to the characteristics of the local school e.g. use of harsh punishment.

ii that variation in the quality of schools both in terms of material provision and in terms of teacher commitment is important.

iii that "money-related causes" e.g. variation in occupation distributions of samples of families in each district is also important.

iv that family factors e.g. the impact of broken homes upon non-enrolment and drop-out is important in all types of school.

Overall, the authors of the draft report argue that, "money-related causes are cited as the most important reasons as compared to all types of school-related characteristics" (GES/UNICEF 1993). If economic and education reasons feature predominantly, the third factor of significance, "the impact of broken families upon non-enrolment and drop-out in all types of school", is viewed also as worthy of further consideration.

The report concludes with some possibilities for further research e.g. " a more focused study in a couple of districts which would be more ethnographic than the current one deploying qualitative methods to the full to try and understand the complex inter-relation between all the factors that have been proposed as causes of drop-out and the variety of educational provision being offered for children" (GES/UNICEF 1993).

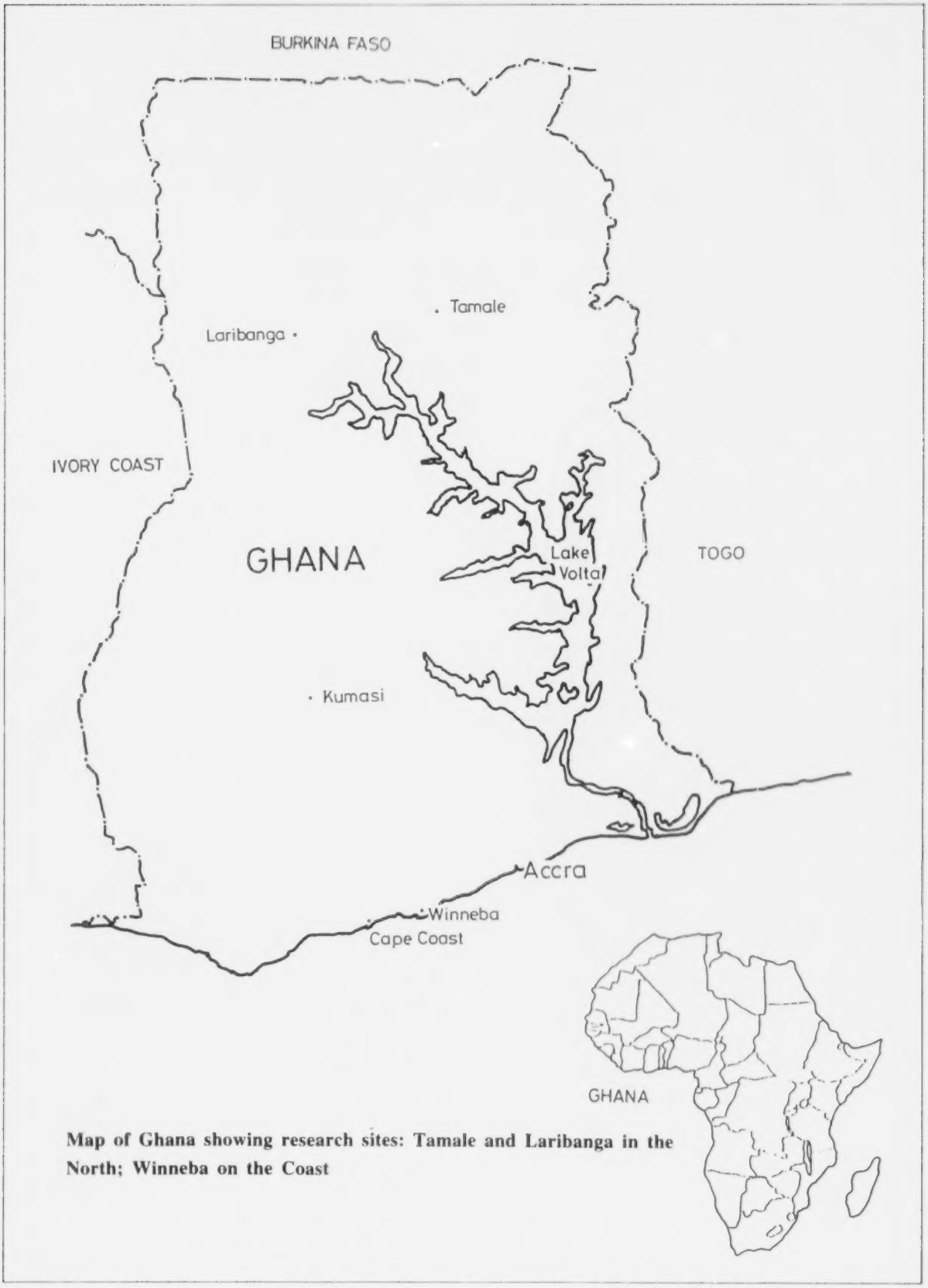
It is with this background in mind that the current research was proposed.

3.4.3.4 Case Study contexts and research process

In **practical terms** the research was carried out in the following ways:

First two **locations** within Ghana were selected for the study: **Winneba** a coastal township (pop. 50,000) 64 kilometres west of Accra, site of the developing University College of Education (where the writer worked whilst living in Ghana) and reasonably prosperous. A number of primary schools centred within the town were selected for examination in contrast to a number of outlying schools in the poorer surrounding rural areas. **Tamale** and **Laribanga village** in the Northern region (population 200,000 and 5,000 respectively), Islamic with the latter known for its problem with girl under-enrolment and drop-out.

[1] Data was collected from 7 districts, 148 teachers therein and from 22 schools. 49 community leaders and 79 children (including the non-enrolled and dropped out) were interviewed.



Map of Ghana showing research sites: Tamale and Laribanga in the North; Winneba on the Coast

Top: Laribanga Primary School

Bottom: Esseukyr Primary School

Secondly the following **research process was undertaken**: initially a broadly – focused questionnaire was administered to teachers in both sites to establish some sense of the dimensions of the problem of girls under-enrolling and dropping out of school,

then a team of indigenous researchers was briefed and trained in identifying sources of data and in particular the carrying out of life history interviews; data was then collected over a nine-month period (Easter 1995 to Christmas 1995) – comprising in all 89 in-depth interviews with teachers, parents, elders, girls in and out of school, and those responsible at district level with the administration of the educational system. Periodically focus group interviews were held with the research team. Individual research diaries were also kept by all the researchers.

To supplement the gradually growing pile of interview transcripts (823 pages of interview data finally produced) the research team collected enrolment and examination statistics from all the schools plus a vast array of government and non-governmental agency reports plus any secondary source material that would help provide background to what emerged from the field. The research team also observed lessons at the various primary schools and, where necessary, spent time in the homes and workplaces of the girl drop-outs. A large number of photographs were also taken.

An essential requirement of the researcher was that he or she was able to interview in the first language of the interviewee – interviews were in fact conducted in six Ghanaian languages – English, Twi, Hausa, Dagomba, Gonja and Kamara (the exclusive language of Laribanga) and then transcribed from tape and written out into English. All the research team – six in all – were qualified teachers, some having previous experience of research techniques.

By focusing on the lives of women and girls in the two contrasting areas (and within those the urban and rural) it was hoped that some sort of representative national picture would emerge illustrating similarities irrespective of location but also unique differences that in turn would highlight the necessity of **not** treating all national contexts as if in some way they were monolithic in character.

3.4.3.5 Analysis and Presentation of the Data

Analysis of the data was both interesting and laborious, a feature well noted by those carrying out qualitative research of this kind. Essentially the data was analysed thematically: after an initial 'read through' of all the material three previously mentioned broad categories were identified and loosely described as 'family', 'poverty' and 'school'. This data was then re-read and roughly coded into more focused categories e.g. 'who pays my fees?', 'relations with parents', 'punishment at school' etc.

Gradually, utilising the idea of progressive focusing, three large 'banks' of categories and sub-categories were accumulated with, at each stage, analytic memos or aide memoires produced to 'capture' meaning and insights as they emerged from the data. In

a number of instances reference was made back to a particular piece of data collected by one of the team members for clarification.

By analysing the data thematically i.e. through the worlds of home, school and the economy, it was hoped that a composite picture would emerge of lives lived past and present in those domains. The focus is therefore more on the collective experience of Ghanaian women and girls than on describing single lives in toto. It became apparent during the fieldwork process that an alternative approach would have been to have interviewed a much smaller group, say between six and twelve people, and to have presented their individual lives as exemplars of experiences common to many. Educational and cultural issues would then have been inferred from those life histories.

The decision, on the other hand, to analyse data by theme and to draw upon the life histories and interview data to illuminate those themes, was taken on the grounds that the resulting analysis would be of particular value to educationists and those working in Government and partner donor organisations interested in understanding the complexity of the issues and the experiences of Ghanaians struggling to improve the quality of their lives.

In an effort to retain a sense of the original interviews extended transcripts of three life history interviews are included in the appendix A of this report.

Finally attention throughout the research process has been on the cultural nature of the issues under examination and the culturally appropriate use of the various research methods and forms of enquiry. The question of girl drop-outs is a sensitive one, particularly to those who have dropped out, and as such the research term were required to act in a way that was both respectful to the communities involved and tactful towards the various individuals interviewed. With this in mind it was decided to use only the speakers' initials in reporting the findings.

The following sections present the findings. The three domains of home, economy and school provide the conceptual organisation of the presentation.

Each section begins with a broad description of the landscape, material drawn from a variety of sources: personal observation, national and international research studies, published and unpublished works. The purpose is to provide the backdrop within which the individuals interviewed live and work, to give a sense of the cultural fabric within which the two case studies are framed. Background and contextual material is provided therefore for the worlds of the home, the economy and the school.

Each section then presents the data drawn from the individual life histories. These "voices of experience" have been analysed and presented thematically; themes emerging from the life history interviews during translation, transcribing and through discussion within the research team.

A major aim of this study was to "allow" individual voices to be "heard" and for this reason, where it seems appropriate, individual testimony is accorded space. Occasionally sections of dialogue between researcher and researched are included to give some sense of the interchanges that occurred in the field.

Throughout an effort is made to link experience with theory and to provide insights for the parent, teacher and development worker.

4 The Culture of the Home: Society, Community and Gender Relations

"...it has become increasingly obvious that if they [development activities] are to be effective, they must be designed and implemented within a framework of understanding how the basic socio-economic unit – the family – functions among the poor".

Sue Ellen M. Charlton

Women in Third World Development,

Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1984.

"It seems then, that it is not just the market-place, but also custom and culture which are important determinants".

Christopher Colclough

"Under-enrolment and Low quality in African Primary schooling: towards a Gender-sensitive solution".

IDS Working Paper 7,University of Sussex, 1994.

4.1 Background and Context

In the second section we argued that it was possible to view culture in two ways: it is both about what people think and do (that is individually and collectively) and the means we devise to describe and evaluate those beliefs and actions.

To make any sense of the cultural context of Ghana or we would suggest any national society it is necessary to gain some understanding of, "the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group...value systems, traditions and beliefs".

This of course is easier said than done. Given that our focus, as educators is the child (though many in Ghana would suggest it was the teacher) it is perhaps appropriate to focus attention on the primary cultural group to which the child belongs: the family and

then to the wider community within which that family resides. Another way of putting it might be to ask the question: how are children brought up in Laribanga, Northern Ghana or Winneba in the Central Region?

In Ghana, and in many so-called developing countries, a key to understanding traditional society is kinship (Nukunya, G.K. 1992). In this sense no child is 'born free' and then able to make his or her own way. Kinship – or more elaborately the ties of social relationship derived from consanguinity, marriage and adoption – mean that from the moment of birth a child enters a human society, he or she is governed not only by specific rules and patterns of behaviours but by sets of reciprocal duties, obligations and responsibilities. Kinship relations govern, for example, where the couple will live after marriage, how property will be transmitted, who succeeds whom and even the particular nature of the newly-born child.

The Ashanti people, perhaps the most well-known outside Ghana – believe that Man is both a biological and spiritual being, being formed from the blood of the mother and the spirit of the father. This belief lies at the core of Ashanti social organisation and as with many traditional African societies, initiates two sets of bonds, a mother-child bond and a father-child bond, which in deriving from their conception of procreation determine two subsequent sets of groupings and relationships.

Though gender might well be viewed as a somewhat politically correct bandwagon making the rounds of development fora at present; in the making of a child's relationship to its community it is a fundamental aspect of identity. Whether you are born a girl or a boy is not insignificant therefore in Ghanaian, and we would suggest most societies.

Writing about a child born and growing up in a Western or European environment is relatively straightforward – we can assume an entry into a nuclear family with attendant grandmothers, uncles, aunts and cousins and so on. Familial relationships in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, though, tend to be more complex with not only the extended family system operating in most areas but the character of that family being determined by either patrilineal or matrilineal descent systems.

The two case studies featured in this study reflect the prevalence of the two descent systems in Ghana: Winneba in the South is home to a largely Akan ethnic group and is therefore matrilineal. Tamale and Laribanga in the North comprise Gonja and Dagomba peoples in the town with Kamaras making up the ethnic population of Laribanga. All

are patrilineal, though, like elsewhere, with urbanisation there has been a tendency for families to become more nuclear and for descent systems to break down.

The operation of these two systems means that in Winneba a child will have more to do with her mother's people; in Laribanga, she would be seen as closer to her father's, finding herself in a society where succession and inheritance pass from father to son and often even to her father's brothers sons rather than to her. Growing up in a matrilineal descent group means, though, that she will not belong to the same descent group as her father and may find her maternal uncle and his wife playing a more significant role in her life than her father. It has been suggested (Nukunya, op. cit.) that such situations greatly limit the father's role in terms of authority and discipline. As we shall see when looking at the schooling of girls, whether living in a patrilineal or matrilineal society, can determine the amount of responsibility a father assumes for the support of his daughter's education.

The importance of the extended family cannot be underestimated in the raising of children. Residential patterns within matrilineal societies mean that often parents do not live with their children and so many of the parental functions are performed by uncles and aunts. It has to be said, too, that many younger children are brought up by older siblings and it is not an uncommon sight in many villages to see nine and ten year old girls carrying younger sisters on their back on route to school and kindergarten.

In Tamale in the North of the country, home of Gonja and Dagomba people, it is also a recognised tradition that children spend a significant amount of time as foster children to various relatives. The practice of fostering, widespread throughout Ghana, means that for many Ghanaians their position in life is attributable not to their parents but to relations, a situation that can, as we shall see later, be fraught with uncertainty.

In **Growing Up in Dagbon (1973)**, the Kingdom of Dagbon being the ancestral home of the Dagomba and containing the large town of Tamale, Christine Oppong paints a vivid picture of a child's life in this dusty Savannah country, echoing in many ways Margaret Mead's classic **Growing up in New Guinea**. It is instructive to note that of the seventy five pages of Oppong's book, seven are devoted to fostering and adoption.

She found in her sample of villages 35% of the boys and 17% of the girls were living with parent's siblings. It seems that the giving of the child to a relative depends very much on the profession and estate of the parents. It also depends on the culture to which the child belongs. Oppong and Abu's (1987) **Seven roles of women:**

impact of education, migration and employment on Ghanaian mothers (ILO, Geneva) contrasts the practice of fostering children between the Ga, who come from Accra, and the Dagomba of the North.

Figure G - Mean longest periods spent separated from Children under 12 years [a] (N = 54)

Age Group	Ga	Dagomba
Young (18 - 24 years)		
Local	3.2	2.6
Migrant	0	0
Total	1.5	1.6
Middle (25 - 34 years)		
Local	0	3.0
Migrant	2.0	2.0
Total	.8	2.4
Older (35 - 50 years)		
Local	1.8	4.0
Migrant	1.8	2.2
Total	1.8	3.1
Entire Population	1.5	2.4

Note: The difference between the ethnic groups is statistically significant for the non-migrants but not for the migrants.
[a] In years and excluding boarding school.

Source: Oppong and Abu op. cit. p 82

As the authors say, "It is among the Dagomba in Tamale, for whom fostering continues to be a culturally sanctioned practice". As their research shows, "it is also more common among separated, divorced and polygynously married women who are less likely to disapprove of the practice" (p 81).

Figure H - Who School Children Stay with

Staying With	Numbers	Percentage
Fathers and mother	94	13.6
Fathers	41	6.0
Father's father	28	4.0
Father's mother	135	20.0
Father's brother	14	2.0
Father's sister	24	3.5
Mother	124	17.0
Mother's father	14	2.0
Mother's mother	107	15.5
Mother's brother	16	2.3
Mother's sister	33	5.0
Other	31	4.8
Boarders	29	4.3
Total	690	100.0

Source: Oppong and Abu op. cit. p 81

(Based on questioning 690 school children, 40 per cent, of the total at primary and middle schools, in April 1963. As there was little difference in residential patterns according to sex or age, the results have been combined).

Communities such as the Dagomba, put forward a number of reasons for fostering, particularly young girls (in fact in Dagomba culture the first daughter of a woman can be claimed by the husband's sister, sanctioned by the **papapuulan** ritual performed during the pregnancy). Four reasons seem to be widespread across the country: first, the social, in that it knits the family together, second, the educational, in that a more experienced mature relative is deemed better able to raise and train a child than often inexperienced parents, thirdly, the economic – by fostering children wealth is spread throughout the family (i.e. children being viewed as an economic asset rather than a burden) and lastly, the view that an in-coming child will not only help with the myriad of tasks to be performed daily around the compound but will provide company, affection and status for relatives especially those aged or childless (Oppong, 1973 op. cit. p 48). And, as we said earlier, for a working mother a young niece or nephew can act **in loco parentis** in the raising of his or her younger cousins.

All this might just be of anthropological interest if it were not for the fact that the coming of an encouragement of universal primary education has created a tension for many families.

Nationally the picture is similar with just over 21% of children living with neither parent but with a relative.

Figure I - Percent of School Age Children Co-Residing with Parents by Age and Sex Household Data

Age/Sex	Both Parents	Mother Only	Father Only	Neither Parent
6 - 11				
Boys	53.6	20.0	8.5	17.9
Girls	50.0	20.2	6.3	23.5
12 - 17				
Boys	47.7	19.9	12.9	19.5
Girls	40.3	22.3	9.6	27.8
Total	48.4	20.5	9.2	21.9

Source: 1987/88 Ghana Living Standards Survey op. cit.

A closer examination of the data reveals that of the 21% living with relatives, 45% are headed by a grandparent, 17% headed by an aunt or uncle, 21% by other relatives and 6% by older siblings.

Growing disparities in wealth and income between North and South, urban and rural, professional and non-professional homes means that existing cultural practices such as fostering are now being adapted, and some would say exploited, in the present economic climate. We shall return to this subject in our later sections dealing with the interface between culture and economic life and culture and the school.

Lawrence Stenhouse suggested that culture is not just **what is** but **what it does**: in other words how a community functions in its day to day existence.

The International Year of the Child (1979) and 1990 World Summit for Children drew attention to a more child-focused view of development. Interestingly Ghana was the first country to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, producing shortly after, a national programme of action, entitled **The Child Cannot Wait** (1992). Much of that programme and subsequent studies (e.g. Grieco, M. et al 1994) have given prominence to the question of child labour and its effect on school enrolment and performance.

For the past few years the Ghana Statistical Service has been conducting surveys into the living standards of its citizens. These surveys, of which there have been three to date, provide a useful, "snapshot picture of the living conditions of Ghanaian households at a key stage in the country's development process" (GLSS 3, 1995).

Such data, which is broad and largely of a quantitative kind, provides an extremely useful backdrop to the kind of in-depth case study work reported on in this report. Looking at the section headed 'Housekeeping activities' a number of interesting, if predictable, statistics emerge:

Figure J - Estimated total hours per day spent on housekeeping activities, by age and sex

							Million hours per day	
	Fetching Wood		Fetching Water		Other Housekeeping		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age								
7 - 14	0.4	0.5	1.1	1.2	1.6	2.2	3.1	3.9
15 - 19	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.6	1.5	1.5	2.3
20 - 24	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.4	1.4	0.6	2.0
25 - 44	0.1	0.8	0.2	1.4	0.8	4.7	1.2	6.9
45 - 59	*	0.3	*	0.4	0.2	1.7	0.3	2.4
60+	*	0.1	*	0.1	0.2	0.7	0.2	0.9
All	0.8	2.2	2.0	4.0	4.2	12.2	7.0	18.4

Source: GLSS 3 Ghana Satistics Service, Accra, 1995

When we look at the same activities from a local perspective – in this case 'Coastal', 'Forest' and 'Savannah', we see a slightly different picture:

Figure K1 - Percentage of households engaged in different housekeeping activities in the last seven days, and average length of time household members spend per week on those activities, by locality

	Urban			Rural				Country
	Accra	Other	All	Coastal	Forest	Savannah	All	
Fetching Wood								
% of households	0.2	24.9	17.7	56.6	73.5	70.6	68.6	50.8
Average hours per week	1.0	15.8	15.7	8.6	10.0	18.1	12.2	12.6
Fetching Water								
% of households	52.3	62.3	59.4	87.7	89.4	94.8	90.6	79.6
Average hours per week	8.4	15.9	14.0	11.5	13.7	24.1	16.4	15.8
Other House-keeping activities								
% of households	98.1	97.1	97.4	97.4	97.8	98.3	97.8	97.7
Average hours per week	31.9	44.1	40.5	29.4	30.3	36.8	32.0	35.0
All House-keeping Activities								
Average hours per week	35.7	56.6	50.5	43.6	49.3	71.8	54.5	53.1
Sample Size	*463*	*1129*	*1592*	*718*	*1374*	*868*	*2960*	*4552*
National Estimate of total hours spent per week on all activities (Million hours)	12	46	59	23	49	45	118	176

Source: GLSS 3 Ghana Statistical Service, Accra, 1995

Contrasting our two case study sites – Winneba (Coastal) with Tamale and Laribanga (Savannah) we can see that a girl born in the North will spend ten hours more per week collecting wood, thirteen more hours fetching water, and seven hours more on general housekeeping duties.

If the average Ghanaian spends approximately 53 hours a week on housekeeping activities, and it is estimated that about one third of those activities are carried out by children under the age of 15, we can deduce that something like between 17 and 18

hours per week are spent by children on work within the home. However, as with all statistical surveys, we must be cautious of painting a too general picture. As we shall see when listening to individual life histories of women and girls, individual life journeys reveal a remarkable number of variations in what is described above.

So far we have suggested that the type of family structure a child enters i.e. matrilineal or patrilineal, the relationship between parents and relatives within the extended family and the work expected of a child within the home very much determines the cultural context of the child's life. A further factor: the cultural view of education will also not only play a significant part in the shaping of an individual's identity but will also have an impact on the subsequent Western-style schooling the child may attend.

There is a saying in Ashanti. '**Wo ba saw asa-bone a, se no se, "wo a saw nye fe", na nse no se "okra, tete gu mu"'.** (When your child dances badly, tell him, saying, "your dancing is not good" and do not say to him "(Little) soul, just dance as you want to") (Rattray R. S., 1923). At home a child is expected to be respectful, charming and smiling when in the company of elders, ready to go without hesitation on the errands of adults, etc. (Sarpong, 1974). Indigenous education in Ghana puts great store on character training (Odamitten, S.K., 1995). Bishop Peter Sarpong writing in his **'Ghana in Retrospect – some aspects of Ghanaian Culture'** – (op. cit.) lists six main aspects of the Ghanaian value system: godliness, respect, honour, hospitality, gratitude and a sense of national pride. Anyone who has lived in the country for any length of time will attest to the pervading influence of these values.
A young child will be expected to acquire these traits of character through the setting of good examples by relatives, pet talks, wise sayings and proverbs. Obedience and humility towards elders is also regarded as a cornerstone in a young child's upbringing. In terms of content a boy or girl would learn about social and political relations within their ethnic group, the meaning and origins of cultural festivals and practice e.g. naming ceremonies, and skills useful in later life, which for boys would be fishing or farming and for girls housewifery and domestic skills related to cooking and child raising.

For the Western educator it is not so much **what** is taught informally within the home that is important but **how** that child is instructed. S.K. Odamitten (op. cit.) describes the way children learn thus:

> *"The method of oral instruction is used to direct the ignorant as to how to go about doing things for the first time successfully...the child is expected to listen carefully and ask only questions that call for clarification...a child who answers back or asks questions is hushed down and called a bad boy or girl. As a child or young person, he is to listen to his elders who are experienced and who know better". (p 28)*

Reward and punishment play an integral part in the socialisation of the young child. Professor Odamitten goes as far to suggest that, "old ladies keep long finger nails for the exclusive purpose of scratching or pinching the errant child!" (ibid.)

The relationship between adult and child is one based on authority and respect. The adult is expected to keep his distance from the child, "keep away from childish things" (Odamitten op. cit.) and to set personal standards of behaviour in accordance with prevailing social norms. Communal rather than individual identity is to be developed coupled with the belief that, "in the indigenous Ghanaian society women have definite and specific roles to play" (ibid.).

Charles Abban writing recently in **West Africa** magazine (Developing Education 31/10 – 6/11, 1994) sums up the strengths and weaknesses of indigenous education practised in Ghana. For him its strengths lay in its emphasis upon relevance: all that was passed on from elder to child was of relevance to the particular culture; secondly it was less expensive than the Western style system and thirdly it encouraged memorisation and retention of what was taught.

The weaknesses he suggests included an over emphasis upon religious values and what he calls 'unscientific thinking, the predominance of rote – learning without any literacy or numeracy, and the giving of, "instructions and ideas from the elders without questions"', something he believes has stifled the creativity of the child.
In order to successfully develop the formal, Western-style education system in Ghana and elsewhere it is necessary, we would argue, for us to have a better understanding of how the child is expected to grow up in the home and in the community. Asking a young, inexperienced teacher to adopt a more child-centred approach which puts more emphasis upon play and creativity than the acquisition of knowledge is fine in theory but likely to be difficult to implement given the traditions that shape both teacher and child who have no experience of such an approach. We shall return to this question when discussing the culture of schooling in section six.

It would be wrong to suggest that cultural life in Ghana is static – a timeless phenomenon uninfluenced by change either from within cultural communities or brought from outside.

Professor G. K. Nukunya's inaugural lecture upon taking up the chair of sociology at the University of Ghana, Legon in February, 1991 was on the subject of: "Tradition and Change: the case of the family". Towards the end of his lecture he suggests that a number of major changes have affected such things as the size of domestic groups, the

authority structures within such groups, relationships between kin groups and the prevalence of extended rather than nuclear family structures. Of the ten major changes he lists: it is worth giving some attention to three: the role of women in the domestic set up, the restructuring of the authority system within the family, and changing attitudes towards children; for these factors help explain much of what follows when we listen to the experiences of women teachers and girl pupils and to providing the cultural framework within which educational development operates.

Major Changes in the Ghanaian Home

1. Women as focal points in domestic life.
2. Restructuring of the authority system within the family.
3. Attitudes towards children and their treatment.
4. The move towards a more nuclear-style family.
5. Increasing conflict amongst in-laws.
6. Care of parents in their old age.
7. Reduction in the rate of polygamy.
8. Age of marriage.
9. Increasing rate of divorce.
10. Inter-ethnic and inter-racial marriages.

Source: Nukunya, G. K., 1992.

His first point concerns the increasing role, or perhaps the better word is burden, put upon the shoulders of women in domestic life. We have already mentioned the fact that women and girls already carry a disproportionate share of domestic duties, what Nukunya suggests is that, "while mothers generally hold tenaciously to their children like limpets even when the position becomes hopeless, men always seek safety in flight with the onset of the slightest trouble" (op. cit. p 20). This observation, which may have more resonance with the matrilineal Akan cultural groups where women traditionally take more responsibility for childbearing, is echoed by the Ghana Living Standards Survey which shows that increasing urbanisation has led to an increase in the number of female-headed households (the overall annual population growth being given at 2.6% with 3.2% growth rates for urban areas and 2.2% for rural areas; 30% of households in rural areas being headed by women with the figure rising to 42% in Accra and 36% in other urban areas – interestingly a survey conducted by Ardayfio-Schandorf suggests that of the 304 women interviewed 51.6% were heads of households, a much higher figure than that given in the national census (1984, 31.9%) or that given in the GLSS. **Source:** Ardayfio-Schandorf, ed. 1994 (op. cit.).

She, like Nukunya, suggests increased urbanisation is a cause but adds that increasing out-migration of educated men from rural to urban parts in search of work and farmers migrating to other rural areas in order to undertake cash crop farming has resulted in a situation where more women – and we would suggest younger female offspring too – are being left behind with the children to assume the responsibility for expenditure, income and important decision-making (Ardayfio-Schandorf, op. cit.). Such a situation has important implications for sending and supporting children, particularly girls, in school.

Professor Nukunya's second change related to the restructuring of the authority system within the family. Referring to Margaret Mead's study of the Generation Gap (1977 p 17) in which she suggested that the socialisation process can be divided into three types: post-figurative – in which children learn from their parents and elders; co-figurative – in which children learn from their peers; and pre-figurative – in which the roles associated with post-figurative are completely reversed i.e. in which parents learn from their children, he suggests that change from the first type of relationship to a second and more dramatically to the third has serious consequences for the maintenance of traditional authority and discipline. This situation has been brought about by the rapid spread of Western-style schooling, which has seen the emergence of a generation of literate children returning to homes in which a majority of elder relatives may well be both illiterate and innumerate. As we shall see when examining children's experiences of school much misunderstanding and hostility can arise when school pupils act as 'go-betweens' in the school-community relationship.

The relationship between a parent's level of education and his or her child's is an interesting one. Peil (1995) in her study of a suburb of Accra reports that in spite of the problems suggested above parents are still willing to provide their children with a higher level of education than they themselves enjoyed. She also reveals that parents regard academic studies as more valuable than vocational even if they themselves successfully experienced the latter and occur at a time now when the former type of schooling does not necessarily lead to employment.

Nukunya's third point relates to changing attitudes towards children and their treatment. He argues that Western-style schooling has undermined and reduced the economic value of children resulting in a state of affairs in which it is no longer prestigious to have a large number of children. He suggests that, though parents still love children as in the past, schooling has placed an economic burden upon parents. This issue is one that runs constantly through the experiences of women teachers remembering their childhood and present-day youngsters reflecting on their struggle to remain in school.

The lot of the African child is not an easy one: born and brought up in a complex environment framed by gender and descent the young boy or girl will be nurtured by many relatives and friends. He or she will be expected to support the family compound by collecting wood, drawing water and 'brushing' and cleaning the environment where he or she lives. The child will also be caring for other younger children and will through an informal type of indigenous education be taught the traditional values of godliness, respect for authority and hierarchy, and an understanding that knowledge is to be gratefully received but not questioned.

The young child will be growing up in a world characterised too by change and uncertainty, with many of the traditional cultural benchmarks threatened by such forces of urbanisation, family break-up and the power of Western schooling itself.

4.2 The Culture of the Home: voices of experience

The cultural factors described so far are echoed in the testaments of the women teachers and girls in and out of school. An analysis of the interviews conducted reveals the following major areas of importance to them: **life within the family, their experiences of gender,** particularly whilst growing up, **attitudes towards schooling,** more general **religious and cultural issues,** and **major changes occurring in family life and the negative impact of authority patterns within the family.**

4.2.1 Life within the family: growing up in Ghana

Camara Laye's evocative autobiographical novel of growing up in a small West African village - The African Child - paints a nostalgic picture of a young boy nurtured in the bosom of extended family and close knit traditional community.

Talking with women teachers and girls of school-going age in Ghana reveals a much changed picture: poverty, early death of relatives, economic hardship and the struggle of the child not only to survive but to make something of life.

GB, a young teacher from Winneba, speaks for many when she describes her family life, and the death of her mother when she was twelve years old.

GB: *"My father was working at the housing corporation and my mother was trading in foodstuffs so for our food it was no problem but it was after her death when we stayed with our auntie, she maltreated us and that was what made our lives tougher and tougher. All the same we lived...alone and came to Winneba.*

After my mother's death my Auntie went for my sisters. She brought four of us and my father's wife took care of the other three. They were at Accra. Life was difficult...

The difficulty was that my dad wasn't around. He left for Nigeria (this would be in the early 1980's) and used to come at two or three year intervals. At the time the food we ate was a problem. We starved sometimes. Because of the hardships I couldn't do well in my G.C.E. 'O' level examinations".

HE, another Winneba teacher, recalls life fostered by an elder sister who played the traditional role of 'auntie'. CM, a teacher from Pomadze village, near Winneba, when asked about pupils dropping out of her class remembered.

CM: *"There was one boy who was dropping out but I didn't like the idea so I informed the headmaster and found out that the boy was living with an auntie – the mother is away from here in Abidjan and the auntie is also not willing to pay the school fees – he stays home sometimes and goes to the junction sometimes to sell".*

The economic burden of fostering a young child created an additional difficulty for the youngster . H B, a headteacher from Esseukyr:

HB: *"Some parents give their children to their relatives who stay. And if they are not able to bring some money to support their people, the child's stay becomes a burden to the person in the community. For a short time the child may stop coming to school because he or she would have to go to where the mother is or where the father is".*

As we shall see later the breaking down of the traditional family and the increasing tendency of fostering, particularly in the South has had an impact on the quantity and quality of a child's school experiences.

Fostering within the extended family is not solely practised for economic reasons. The Moshe people of Ghana's northern region hold the view, expressed in the South too, that it is "good" for the child to be separated from her natural parents:

Did you go to stay with any of your aunts?

ZA: *No, my mother didn't like that though my aunt would have liked it. She wanted me to stay with her but my mother wept till I was brought back to her.*

Do you remember staying with your Aunt?

ZA: *Yes, for a few days.*

Do the Moshies send their children to other relations?

ZA: *Yes, they do.*

I am wondering if that wouldn't make it difficult for girls to go to school?

ZA: *The reasons for sending children out is to get the girls well trained for the future. There is a belief that children trained by their mothers are usually spoilt.*

Do the aunts usually want the girls to do more work instead of going to school?

ZA: *Yes. They do more work than school. The unfortunate thing is that neither of your parents can complain.*

Why can't the father complain?

ZA: *It is a social compromise to keep the relationship going and not hurt his sister.*

Listening to these accounts of growing up in an aunt's house summons up an image of Cinderella. ZA, the drop out from Tamale comes straight to the point:

ZA: *"I used to go to school regularly till I got to form one (the old middle school first year, now JSS). Where I used to absent myself from school. I used to go about twice a week. I was staying with my uncle's wife. So when all the children and she is leaving for work, she tells me to stop school and take care of the house. My aunt told my uncle to let me stop going to school and take care of the children in the house. So I stopped when I was in form one middle school".*

If for many living with an aunt was not a happy experience, for a few it was better. RA and JB, both teachers from Winneba have fond memories of their aunts:

RA: *"I stayed with my Aunt and I was very happy with them because they didn't make me feel like an outsider...I grew up in a happy atmostphere".*

JB: *"I had a literate aunt, Professor Jackson's mother who came and told my mother that I shouldn't go into fishing and that she should send me to school".*

Many young teachers recall being cared for by their grandparents. AD of Winneba:

AD: *"My grandfather was a 'half-half' i.e. he learnt from the Mass Education Programme and was able to read and write. So he normally taught us anything he felt like teaching. He would ask us what we learnt at school. We would tell him our opinion and he would also give us some work especially maths and reading...we were about nine but my real mother did not get money in the initial stages since my grandmother was trading so she was the sole caretaker of myself and my siblings".*

Mr M-R, an elder of Esseukyr, a poor rural community outside Winneba believes that inadequate fostering is a major issue in his village.

M-R: *"Most of them live elsewhere and leave their children with their grandparents to take care of them. They hardly return to remit fees for school or find out what is happening. Without money the grandparents also can do nothing".*

But whether fostered or brought up by parents, children in Ghana are never lonely: many young teachers came from large families and many recounted tales of infant mortality and sickness within the family.

GB: *"Well a boy was before the twins. He got to the age of five and died. Later after the twins she gave birth to triplets who were all boys but fell sick and died. Later the babies died after a month".*

DM, a teacher from Winneba is one of ten children, her mother losing four. While a young pupil of Pomadze school she described her family.

DM: *" We are thirteen in number. My daddy is married to four women".*

A M-T: *"Mother had nine children but the ninth one went with her. Five of us survived but four died".*

If families are large they are also the places where the child works, with girls often caring for the needs of brothers and younger siblings. AI, a drop-out from Laribanga spent most of her time as a seven year old.

AI: *"Fetching water, cleaning dishes and cooking, and roasting gari".*

All the teachers and children interviewed talked of sweeping the compound before and after school, fetching water and washing cooking utensils. EA, a parent from Gyahadze points out the important reciprocal relationship between parent and child.

EA: *"She will by all means look after her siblings. We, the parents, will expect her to reciprocate the love we had for her by looking after the young siblings, to come to the same level as she".*

A child is, therefore, not simply an individual growing up as one of many. He or she, depending on age and where placed in the line of siblings will be expected to work and to take early responsibility for younger brothers and sisters. We would suggest that recognition of these relationships by development agencies could make aid more effective.

A child is also expected to acquire acceptable social values. RA, a teacher from Winneba describes her father.

RA: *"Apart from educating me to take my studies seriously he always advised me to love all those who came my way. In other words he advised me to be social, loving and obedient".*

Talking with women teachers, who have by definition been successful at school, and with drop-outs who have not, it is possible to see the emergence of a wealthier class of family who in supporting each other prosper. SF, a teacher from Winneba:

SF: *"My mummy learnt hairdressing and she didn't like it so settled for business. My daddy is an agent for a company in Nottingham. They supply machines".*

Another teacher from the same town, LA, describes her three brothers:

LA: *"The first born is at the Institute of languages, the second is an extension officer at Winneba here and the third is at the University College of Education, Winneba".*

In contrast, MA, a drop-out from Pomadze just up the road but more rural and poorer, has no-one in the immediate family benefitting from schooling:

MA: *"My elder sister sells cooked rice at the market, the second and third are farmers and I'm the last...*

None of them went to school. I was the first. Anyway the third one went up to class three and dropped out".

The widening gap between rich and poor, as we shall see in the next section, is creating a situation where fostering is likely to be the only solution to parents attempting to make a living and at the same time educate a large number of young children.

A major purpose of our research was to see whether living and being schooled in the largely Islamic North was significantly different to the Christian, matrilineal south. We also wanted to see whether the urban-rural divide was important.

A perception amongst many teachers interviewed was that support for schooling was

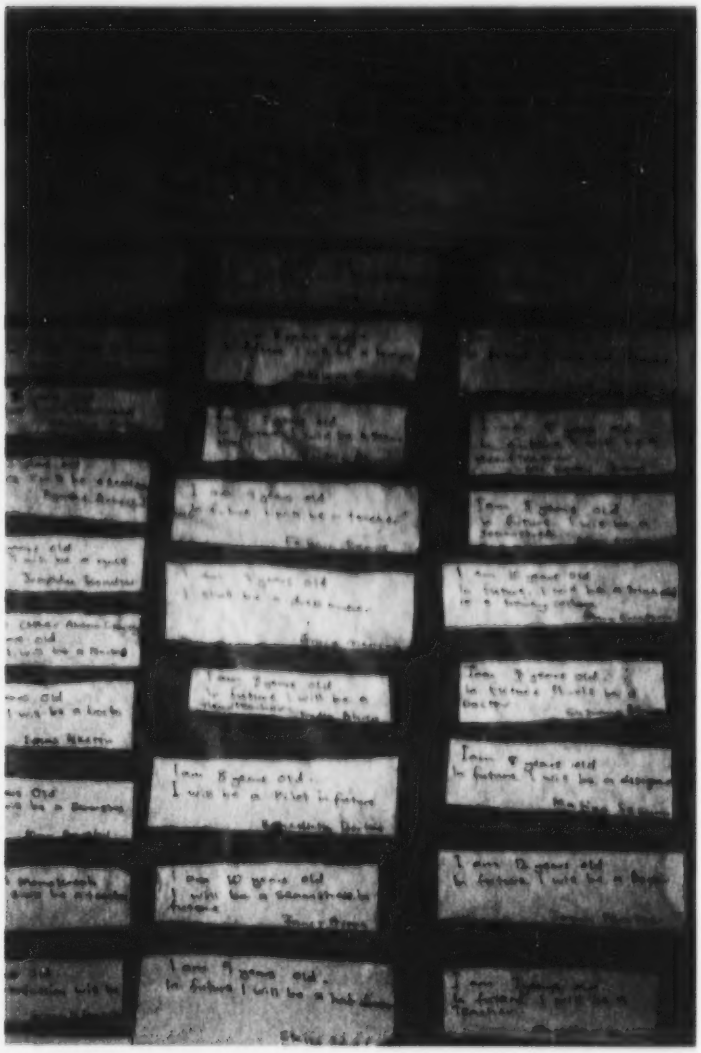
generally stronger in the South and more so in urban than rural settings. Villages were also viewed as places where town-dwellers could acquire girls to help in the home. JB, headteacher, Gyahadze:

JB: "Sometimes people go to the villages to look for girls to be maids and promise to allow them to continue [school] but don't' when they take them away".

The gender divide in terms of clearly defined roles was also seen as a rural, more Northern phenomena. SA, a parent from Tamale, believes:

SA: "Those of us in towns help our wives more and are more responsible".

Talking with children in both Winneba in the South and Laribanga in the North brought out the different levels of career choice and subsequent levels of economic property.



Children's career choices at a Winneba school

Whereas almost all the pupils' parents in the Northern village were farmers, focus group discussions among class five children in Winneba revealed parents who were traders, accountants, a pensioned soldier, a postal worker, and two who were farmers. If the towns of Tamale and Winneba were relatively richer economically they were not necessarily more attractive places to live. SF, a young teacher at the District council school, described her first impressions of the coastal town where she was about to begin her teaching career:

Whereas almost all the pupils' parents in the Northern village were farmers, focus group discussions among class five children in Winneba revealed parents who were traders, accountants, a pensioned soldier, a postal worker, and two who were farmers. If the towns of Tamale and Winneba were relatively richer economically they were not necessarily more attractive places to live. SF, a young teacher at the District council school, described her first impressions of the coastal town where she was about to begin her teaching career:

SF: *"I realised that the environment was too dirty especially the market: especially during the rainy season it is terrible – you see lots of flies and filled gutters with 'spirogyras' in them... and the way they treat the food items, they don't cover them".*

4.2.2 Experiences of gender relations within the family

Three issues emerged as significant when women and girls (and sometimes men) talked about the place of females in the home and community, namely **traditional and still widely-held attitudes concerning what girls and women could and could not do, the expectations of girls vis-à-vis those of boys; and the importance for girls of successful women as role models.**

Traditional attitudes towards gender are perhaps well summed up by an elder of Winneba, RB, who is talking here about different attitudes to bringing up girls and boys:

RB: *"...when mothers are attached more to the female children they try to have special love for these children and eventually whenever a daughter goes wrong, instead of the mother to stamp out any bad habit in that particular child, she will condone with the problem. This also contributes to the daughter being proud of things whereas a boy may be very serious in going to school though a girl may feel reluctant because she feels the mother is behind her. So the women contribute to the drop-out of girls especially in the primary stage.*

If you look at society you see they are willing to do everything for that child, so it enters her head that she can take the chance of doing anything. When a teacher wants to chastise her for doing a wrong it becomes difficult for the girl to accept the wrong-doing. As for boys people think every boy is bad but to some extent we are not pampered by our mothers so we try to continue with our education as far as our efforts can carry us...if a child doesn't go to school a father contributes by inquiring why a particular child didn't go to school but in most cases in the Ghanaian society, when the child does anything wrong we try to attribute it to the mother. This is because of the feeling that the mother cares for the children while the father cares for the whole household".

There is therefore a view that, to quote a parent in Gydadze:

"girls are not like boys".

And accordingly should be treated differently. Interestingly the belief that girls are intrinsically good – "sugar and spice and all things nice", is echoed by another teacher, CM, who talks here about why parents prefer daughters to go trading:

CM: *"Well trading itself goes with the girls and the parents also think that the boys could misuse the money after doing their selling but the girls wouldn't. They will bring everything home".*

If obedience and trustworthiness are important then so is the view that a girl, pampered by her mother, is easily "spoiled".

This view seems stronger amongst northern, Muslim people interviewed. SA of Tamale:

SA: *"Some of the girls are hardworking especially in the early stages but later the young men spoil them".*

A particularly contentious issue at present in Ghana is the problem of schoolgirl pregnancy. The issue also reveals a lot about traditional and changing attitudes to women. In Ghana's **Daily Mirror**, June 22nd a feature article on the subject asked a cross-section of opinion leaders: "Pregnant schoolgirls: what should we do with them?"

Suggestions ranged from 'rehabilitating' the girls by providing vocational schooling for them once they had left school to have the child to taking a stronger line with the men responsible for impregnating the girl.

Listening to a number of respondents there is still a belief that if a girl or woman improves her appearance she is increasing her likelihood of being involved in immoral acts.

The headteacher of Gyahadze school, JB described one girl of thirteen or fourteen years.

JB: *"Her parent has left her alone here. She was given a new pair of shoes and a bag and she looked very attractive going to school. She became pregnant because her neat appearance attracted men to her".*

As we shall see in the next chapter it is poverty however rather than riches that leads many girls into early pregnancy.

When discussing the education of girls it is revealing to discover the cultural expectations of what a girl or woman can or cannot do.

Many of the women teachers, when talking about career choices after completing secondary school reveal low societal expectations. For AA, a Northern headteacher, such attitudes were common in her early life:

AA: *"At school all I can remember is that I used to compete with boys in class and used to be beaten for this".*

Later she found further obstacles in her path:

AA: *"I have always loved being a teacher and I was to go for further studies relating to my profession at Winneba but my husband wasn't in favour of that".*

When asked if she will continue to try and further her studies (she is now in her early 50's) she said, somewhat sadly:

AA: *"I will love to further my studies if I get the chance. The problem is that my husband never gives me a chance but I think I can now go since I don't give birth anymore".*

One woman who defied her husband paid a high price. CM, now teaching at a small primary school outside Winneba described her husband's reaction to her decision to train as a teacher:

CM: *"Before I went to the training college he didn't like the idea. He would rather I traded but I insisted on going, so when I came he had married another woman and left me and the children".*

A common expectation amongst parents is for successful girls to enter the teacher training college and for boys to try for the senior secondary school (and then University).

RA a teacher remembers:

RA: *"When I wanted to enter secondary school a relative of mine came to give very bad advice that it wasn't good for girls to go into secondary school and that in case I got pregnant, I may have to stop".*

MA, another Winneba teacher, shows the resourcefulness of many a female teacher interviewed:

MA: *"Right from the word go, especially after leaving middle school teaching was the profession I was interested in so when my uncle said I should go to commercial school I couldn't refuse. But inwardly I didn't have the interest so I left secretly".*

She in fact entered teachers' training college and is now a successful and resourceful primary school teacher.

The importance to girls and young women of successful women as role models emerged as the third issue of importance when discussing gender relations within the family.

DV a Laribanga teacher, clearly remembers a visit to Accra when aged nine or ten:

DV: "When my dad was admitted at Accra hospital I went to visit him and saw ladies well dressed with badges. So I told my dad that I will also like to be like those ladies. He told me then I would need to study hard and go high. I promised to study hard".

The vagaries of African politics then intervenes:

DV: "However, I couldn't go to secondary school or up to university level because Dad was with Kwame Nkrumah's government, and when the coup d'état came he went outside the country so my stepmother had to take care of us and I was advised to write entrance exam for training college, which I did".

A number of primary school girls in focus group discussions talked of wanting to be 'a lady': to be able to drive a car, dress well, and as one said:

" a lady is a girl who has attended school up to a good stage and is doing government not farming" (Catholic girls school, Winneba class six focus group).

MA of Winneba puts it well when she relates an incident from her childhood:

*MA: "What motivated me most were two girls (older than us) in the same village and who were attending school at Beyin – about five miles away from our village where there was no school. I liked the way they dressed up, carrying their books, and going up and down each day and the way they behaved in the community. There was a local newspaper (printed in the local language, Nzema) called **"Kakyevole"** which carried some short stories and when we were together those girls would read the stories to us. I then had the interest that one day I would also be able to read to my younger brothers and sisters".*

4.2.3 Traditional views of the value of schooling and support given to children

Chief: "I think this is the work of God. Girls who are serious make it. The lazy end by getting 'spoilt' by young men". (Chief of village of Laribanga)

CA: "My uncle didn't see the good in educating a female, he preferred to get me married". (CA, teacher from Tamale)

Two opinions that reflect core values, particularly in the north of Ghana. Time and again we were told by administrators and senior teachers that many traditional people in

the rural north did not really value sending girls to school. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that there are not countervailing forces – a number of teachers talked of a particular relative or respected friend who interceded on their behalf and persuaded a parent or uncle to change his mind and support their schooling.

PK, of Tamale believed her immediate relatives considered schooling for her of no use:

PK: *"One of my uncles even came to ask my father to withdraw me because it was no use but my father encouraged me. He kept telling me to work hard and not disappoint him".*

DA, a headteacher of Winneba reveals another attitude when asked whether schooling helps a young woman gain a good marriage:

DA: *"In some areas it helps them, in certain areas it doesn't because some men do not like to have one who are at par with them. If I want to marry I must marry somebody who is a little below me (for instance) if I am a graduate I may not like to marry a graduate because at times she may not take you to be head of the house".*

The Chief of Choggu in Tamale suggested a change in attitudes:

Chief: *"We didn't encourage female education. Women and females were never thought of as people who would ever be leaders or decision-makers. They were regarded as people of lesser abilities but now we have seen that women too could be of help to their communities through education...so everyone now tries to send everyone to school irrespective of sex".*

He, like the young teachers mentioned earlier, noted the importance of women now being seen to play roles traditionally reserved for men.

In the constructing of the life history interviews a point was made to try and encourage interviewees to talk about support they did or did not receive at important times of their life such as primary schooling and at key decision-making moments, such as when deciding a future after the period of compulsory schooling.

Reviewing the testimonies from both case studies, North and South, the key factor appears to be **paternal support**, particularly during the early years at school. For almost every child spoken to, support from the mother or an aunt was taken as read, it was the support or withholding of assistance from the father that appeared to be a crucial factor.

The interview with G, a teacher in Laribanga (the only female teacher in the village) was typical:

Would you say your father and mother supported you when you were in school?

G: *Yes, my mother did a lot but my father didn't do anything.*

Do you think your mother sacrificed to get you in school? What are the things your mother did for you when you were in school?

G: *She paid my school fees, sewed my school uniforms and provided my needs.*

When paternal support was offered it was clearly remembered:

TY: *"My father was particular about our education and as an incentive, we had tea and eggs". (TY, teacher, Choggu)*

JA, a drop out from Tamale, believes lack of paternal support was largely to blame for her own misfortune:

JA: *"One of our brothers has **even** stopped going to school because our father's attitude towards education".*

The use of the word 'even' also says a great deal about the position of daughters within the family.

Unlike JA, many if not all of the successful women teachers give credit to the support shown to them by one or both parents, a large number singling out the important role of the mother in paying fees, providing uniforms, and generally encouraging them. Targeting aid towards the mother or aunt within the family may well be a productive way to support girls through school.

Not all fathers were cast in a poor light. SA from Tamale, whose daughter became pregnant, speaking in Gonja with a local researcher, had the following interchange:

"The Gonjas say that if you deliver a snake as your child you don't throw the snake away. You tie it around your neck. I think we should rather be more patient with them [girls in school] and help them. What do you say about this instead of leaving them to their fate?"

SA: *"I was really sad that she got pregnant. I have always had it in mind to do as much as I could to help her even if it means selling some of my properties. I intended buying her a sewing machine if she was not academically good, but she really disappointed. Now I am worried about the younger ones. I will continue to advise them. I suffered in life but the children do not appreciate what I am doing and that is why they say their mother is more supportive. That looks true because traditionally, the man finds the grain and the woman is in charge of processing it into edible food".*

The strength of support offered by a mother is often related to the lack of educational opportunities experienced by her. A number of women teachers echoed the words of VC, a teacher from Essuekyr:

VC: *"My mother didn't attend school but she was serious that all her children should have education".*

Lack of support from either parent is most noticeable, not surprisingly, from those who have dropped out of school. Many of the girls now selling oranges or iced water at road junctions talked of the death or sickness of a parent, divorce and subsequent fostering, often by grandparents and the lack of support given by relatives towards their schooling.

AH, one of four drop-out girls interviewed in Laribanga presented the stark facts of her situation and many like her:

Did you really not like school?

AH: *No.*

Were your school fees being paid?

AH: *No.*

Did you get any help from your parents?

AH: *No.*

4.2.4 Religious and 'cultural' issues in relation to family life

Conducting the two case studies in two parts of the country known for their distinctive religious and ethnic character made it possible to assess to some extent the impact of religious and so-called 'cultural' life on the growing up of the Ghanaian school child.

Two major issues emerged: **first that many thought that it is the cultural rather than specifically religious factors that determine parents' support of education in the North and secondly, the issue of early marriage, particularly in the North, was cited by many as important in considering ways to improve the lot of the girl child.**

The question of culture or religion is an interesting one, a number of respondents suggesting that practices such as early marriage of young women and a hesitation to send girls to school are cultural rather than specifically Islamic factors.

AA, a young female teacher from Tamale suggested that many who oppose female education do so for religious reasons but that:

AA: *"People misinterpret religion. They say that if a girl is educated she won't get a husband".*

Another teacher, a headteacher from Tamale, ZA, told us that because most Muslims in Tamale are converts to Islam there is little support for denying girls an education. The suggestion is that it is traditional rural cultural values that are standing in the way of promoting female education. A number of times during conversations with male elders in the rural village of Laribanga we were told that a woman was more respected when married and that Western-style education 'spoilt' a young girl. It is interesting too, that in the case of Laribanga, the district education authorities have not responded to the community's request for an Arabic teacher to be posted to the school. Listening to the legitimate request of community leaders for such provision is one way of signalling to parents the cultural relevance of Western-style school to their families.

The question of early marriage is a serious albeit complex issue. AA, a headteacher from Tamale told us that:

AA: *"It's a belief among the societies in the north of Ghana that a girl should marry as a virgin and so they tend to feel that if you pursue education for too long you will lose your virginity on the way".*

Another headteacher from the same part of Tamale, IB, added:

IB: *"Despite modernity, there is less attention for girls in school. Many Moslems still want to get their daughters married early. I remember in 1976 when I was in Sakasaka Junior Secondary school, two girls were removed from my class – form 2 – and forcibly wedded. I tried to explain to the parents but it didn't help".*

Girls themselves are only too aware of the issue. Three Junior Secondary school girls from Laribanga:

> Are they forced or do they marry willingly?
>
> *They are forced.*
>
> Who forces them?
>
> *Their fathers and mothers. (JSS Focus Group, Laribanga)*

An elder man from Tamale expressed what we are sure is a widely held belief:

Elder: *"It depends very much on the girls. Most of them are found following men and paying little attention to school. In that case it is better the girl marries instead of letting her spoil the more".*

As we shall see when looking at the late age many girls are going through school, a dilemma does arise when a parent is supporting a sixteen or seventeen year old girl

through the last few years of the nine-year basic education cycle. Amongst other things it raises the question of how much compulsory schooling a girl or perhaps at that age, young woman should receive when – a) the schooling is still so poor and b) she and her parents might well be better served by her pursuing more appropriate social and economic activities.

Before leaving the questions of socio-cultural and religious factors it may be worth saying something about specific initiation ceremonies and rites that are still practised in Ghana.

Though only raised during three of the eighty-nine interviews (and interestingly not mentioned at all during the pupil focus group interviews) there is some evidence to suggest that forcible marriage of pubescent girls to fetish priests is still to be found.

Two teachers – VN and DA from Winneba – made reference to teenage girls becoming "possessed" by spirits and removed from school and given up for training as a priestess. A refuge for girls who have runaway from "trokosi" priests has also been established outside Accra and it would appear that some parents eager for money, are willing to "sell" a daughter to such a priest.

4.2.5 The changing family: domestic break up and the impact of Western-style schooling

For many visiting Ghana it is a surprise to learn of the difficulties facing many families in a country renowned for its rapid socio-economic change. Though statistics, particularly the valuable Ghana Living Standards Survey, provide an idea of the stresses and strains facing many people in this part of the world, facts and figures are brought to life when listening to young women teachers and groups of school girls relate the difficulties they have experienced.

A nine year old girl, MN, now dropped out of school in Winneba recounted what had happened to her since her parents divorced two years previously:

MN: *"He has divorced my mother and married another".*

Mother and daughter are now unhappily living together though MN suffered badly on one occasion:

MN: *"Please, I have not offended her. She even went for the police who took me away and beat me up".*

...I stand under the mango tree over there and return after she has stopped quarrelling".

If parents divorce and children are fostered by aunts or grandparents many end up:

"Transferring unofficially from one school to another, so in effect hey have stopped going to a particular school". (F.G. p 6 girls, Winneba)

The late payment of fees often results from a child travelling to and from the guardian's home to where a parent resides:

"Some girls are good but their parents toss them up and down between them, then when she [the girl] needs money the mother tells her to go to the beach to look for fish so they can cook with it..." (F.G. p 6 girls, Winneba)

MA, a thirteen year old drop out was located selling oranges at a busy road junction outside Pomadze – Asebu where she lived with her ailing grandparents. At Easter in her fifth year, she had been asked for C800 (about 40p at that time) to pay for an examination fee. Unable to pay she had removed herself from school and had taken up selling fruit to support herself and her grandparents. She had lost track of her divorced parents and regrettably had become pregnant by a local apprentice who had deserted her. Crying and upset she told us:

MA: *"Yes I blame my father and my mother for being in this situation. I am sad because I am drop out and going through all these problems at such a tender age".*[*]

A young girl had been forced out of school for less than the cost of a bottle of beer. Returning to Accra to consider her situation and others like her it was brought home to us how many children can so easily find themselves at risk and in danger of succumbing to circumstances not of their choosing.

Professor G. K. Nukunya suggested that a major effect of Western-style schooling has been an undermining of traditional authority structures within the extended family.

An elder from Laribanga put it this way:

Elder: *"A taste of schooling makes them rebels. If she gets to a higher class and especially if she is a bit grown she refuses to farm and will prefer loitering about especially if it is not her wish to leave school because her schooling cannot be catered for".*

[*] MA gave birth to a healthy baby boy seven months later.

The question of 'disrespect' and 'stubbornness' was raised a number of times by headteachers and parents.

MM, the headteacher of Laribanga considered:

MM: *"most people think the children of today feel they are intelligent and want to go their own way".*

A number of girls in conversation spoke of their peers refusing to eat traditional food prepared by relatives, others being:

> *"stubborn and disobedient so when thy talk about their needs to parents they refuse to give them their requests". (Focus group, P6 Class Winneba)*

Another girl sums up the problem well:

> *"Some parents feel that wisdom is acquired from school, so when the girls are insolent at home the parents tell them to stop schooling because they cannot pay money only for the girl to be insolent to them". (Focus group, P6 Class Winneba)*

Though most parents spoken with appeared happy with the progress being made by their children at school, it is apparent that a tension does exist between the culture of Western-style schooling and the traditional values of the home and village community.

Educating a girl to acquire a second language, the ability to add and subtract, the ability to make decisions and to think for herself and to aspire to a career rather than solely early marriage and the raising of children has implications for the development of the education system, particularly if parents are still being asked to make an economic sacrifice to sustain a child in school.

The greatest tension that exists however is economic – keeping a child in nine years of schooling let alone more is an economic burden that is difficult to bear. Poverty is however, far from being a God-given state beyond the control of those who determine national affairs.

To gain a fuller understanding of why it is difficult to improve the quality of primary education for a vast majority of children in developing countries such as Ghana it is necessary to examine the relationship between culture and economics and its impact on education and development.

5. Culture and the Economy: the Impact of Poverty on Community, Schooling and Gender Relations

"Poverty is the common lot of Ghanaians"

Douglas Rimmer

in Staying Poor: Ghana's Political Economy 1950-1990

Pergamon, Oxford, 1992.

"It is the poverty – generating processes which appear to be more gender – differentiated. In Ghana, education is perhaps the most visible of these processes".

Lawrence Haddad

"Gender and Poverty in Ghana: A descriptive Analysis of Selected Outcomes and Processes" in IDS Bulletin, 1991 Vol. 22 No.1 IDS, University of Sussex.

"Despite the gains that Ghana has made, poverty remains a serious and extensive problem".

World Bank, 1995

L.K.T Dorvlo, an adult educator from the university of Ghana at Legon just outside Accra spent some time in 1978 with a group of Ewe speakers listening to the conversations of chiefs, elders and ordinary citizens with the aims of producing a word register of the most common words used by those speaking.

The list below of the five most commonly uttered words or concepts are revealing in telling us about the life of the common Ewe:

Figure L – From Dorvlo, L.K.T. Adult Literacy Teaching in Ghana: adapting the Freeream Approach and Technique, Ghana Universities Press, Accra, 1993.

Ewe	**English**
dowuawe	hunger
kododo	lack of money
ahedada	poverty
howu	overpricing of goods
kudidi	drought

Visiting Accra as a short term visitor or consultant one could easily generate a different vocabulary: road building, restaurants, bustling airports, foreign exchange bureaux; all a far cry from the experiences of the common Ewe farmers and a long way from the later 1970's when Ghana sank to the bottom of the pile economically, and some would say, politically.

It would be wrong though to assume that economic development and the incidence or lack of poverty is somehow part of that 'neutral' and value-free world of economics and therefore in some way outside the affairs of Man.
What happened to Ghana during the military regimes of the late 1970's – and the preceding early years of Independence – and what has 'transformed' the country during the Rawlings' years are the result of priorities established, decisions – taken, albeit by powerful external interests, and policies implemented that reflect economic values, economic choices, an economic culture, that has, we would suggest, legitimised an economic order which promotes wealth and, of course, in so doing sanctions a necessary level of poverty.

Poverty is therefore not neutral but 'chosen' and Douglas Rimmer is wrong when he suggests that it is, 'the common lot of Ghanaians'. It is indeed the common experience of many who live in Ghana and yet as we shall see is a direct result of a cultural agenda established and developed since, 1970.

5.1 Background and Context

5.1.1 The Making of Poverty

When the Gold Coast became the first European colony to gain Independence in 1957 the future looked promising. Export prices of cocoa and timber, two of Ghana's leading commodities, were healthy; the young and dynamic Kwame Nkrumah seemed set on prioritising health and education, and there seemed little likelihood of ethnic violence to disrupt internal economic development and deter foreign investment. He had even decided to press ahead with the scheme to construct the mighty Akosombo dam which would electrify the new country in more ways than one and set in motion a programme of industrialisation.

John Toye in his article "Ghana's economic reforms, 1983-87: origins, achievements and limitations" suggests that the unforeseen disastrous state of Ghana's economy twenty six years after Independence was as a result of three compounding sets of causes:

1. a flawed development strategy since the 1960's e.g. the priority given to industrialisation via over-taxation of cocoa production.
2. gross economic mismanagement and corruption between 1973-81 e.g. the printing of more money to fund large public works.
3. a simultaneous set of severe shocks in the early 1980's e.g. drought in 1983

reducing hydro-electric output from Akosombo by 20-25%, the repatriation by Nigeria of 500.000 Ghanaians, many of whom were public sector employees, and reduction in cocoa and timber exports because of widespread fires.

With a population increasing by about 2.5% to 3% per annum and a spiralling set of inflationary economic policies Ghana succeeded in moving in the 1970's from being a middle-income to a low-income country.

Culturally, it can be argued that, many of those living in sub-Saharan Africa belong more to families and communities than they do to nation-states. Many understand too that employment in a state-controlled industry or a public service bureaucracy is a reward for possessing what Charles Handy calls, "connection – power". The fact that Ghana, to quote Toye, "fell under the rule of a kleptocracy" (op. cit. p 45) can be attributed to cultural as well as traditionally 'economic' causes. The authoritarian style of Nkrumah, the stifling of political opposition and, we suspect, a Ghanaian sense of optimism that it would 'all be alright' in the end provided a heady cocktail of factors which would see a radical review of the way the country was run economically and politically with the arrival of Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings in 1979 and the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) shortly after.

Supported by the World Bank and IMF the ERP, a structural adjustment programme or (SAP) put in place four years after the Rawlings coup emphasised the elimination of price controls, privatisation of state industries, removal of subsidies, free trade, and other orthodox liberal economic measures (Ho Won Jeong, 1995, p 82).

Having followed a SAP for the past thirteen or so years Ghana presents an interesting case for assessing the relative successes and failures in adopting such a recourse.

There would appear to be winners and losers. And a concern particularly by the World Bank to build a bridge between the two, or in its own words, "to develop the linkage between growth and poverty reduction" (World Bank, 1995). Another way of looking at this divide between successes and failures is to examine the situation from the **macro and micro-economic perspectives**. In so doing we build a bridge between national and international economic policies and their impact upon household economies. The winners appear to be macro economic policies and those individuals owning large export-oriented cocoa farm. Bank figures (op. cit. 1995) show an average growth of 4.7% p.a. since 1987, a fall of inflation from 123% in 1983 to 18% in 1991 – though it has now returned to about 50-60% p.a. – and an increase in external trade in GDP from 5% in 1983 to 55% in 1994. A result has been a relative decline in the

importance of agriculture to the Ghanaian economy (1983-86, 50% of GDP to 40% in 1992-94) and an increase in service industries from 38% to 45% over the same period, making it the largest sector of the economy. Interestingly, a focus on exports has also seen the largely privatised gold mining sector replace cocoa as the leading export earner.

The winners of SAP have also been shopkeepers and traders benefiting from the lifting of state controls on producer prices. The adjustment programme has been very beneficial to the "comprador class" embracing a wide variety of occupations – from local agents of foreign business, partners and consultants to such businesses as hotel accommodation. Those who can afford to buy into state-owned enterprises often at concessional prices have also seen a dramatic increase in economic opportunities as have large local and foreign capitalists who have invested in export-oriented sectors, such as gold-mining, the timber industry, and other capital-intensive raw material-producing industries (Ho Won Jeong, op cit. p 86).

The losers, significantly, are to be found on the micro scale. Whereas intervention such as devaluation, trade policy, monetary and fiscal reform occur at macro level, household responses are at the micro level (ADB, 1995) and it is at this level that one can question the success of structural adjustment in countries such as Ghana.

The most vulnerable households now are those which depend on non-export crop agriculture for their livelihood, to be found mostly in the Northern areas of the country; and a poor urban class of Ghanaian reliant upon employment created by the 'boom' and yet hit hard by inflation and the introduction of 'cash 'n' carry' policies in public sector services such as health and education. It is salutary to note that whereas poverty nationally appears to have fallen from 37% in 1987-88 to 32% in 1991-92 and rural poverty from 42% to 34% (World Bank, 1995) poverty in Accra has, however increased from 7% in 1988 to 21% in 1992 (Business in Ghana, July-August, 1995).

A recent briefing paper, produced by BRIDGE, at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, reviewing gender issues in Ghana and summarising much work recently done in this area, suggests that the static picture of poverty given by quantitative data needs to be seen alongside the more qualitative work (e.g. Norton, A. et al 1993) which stresses the multidimensionality of poverty. Here the importance of distinguishing between poverty and destitution and issues of dependency and self-sufficiency emerge. The importance of social networks and support available to people in times of crisis also emerged. Urban poverty, as suggested above, is primarily related to labour market opportunities, whereas rural poverty is highly dependent on natural resource base (BRIDGE, March 1994 p 28).

If poverty – and growth – has its macro-economic characteristics then at a micro-level it can be seen in the responses of the household by means of coping strategies which vary depending on the region and whether the location is urban or rural. BRIDGE, focusing on the relationship between gender and poverty, also make the point that in the micro world of family and community coping strategies to limit the effects of poverty often adversely affect females living in those communities. They suggest that outmigration from the poor North to the relatively richer South may have deepened women's vulnerability given that females have less access to such migratory opportunities and that remittances received from absent partners are unreliable and often do not compensate for the loss of male labour (BRIDGE, op. cit. p 28).

The domain of poverty is, therefore, one populated by individuals whose relative lack of wealth is contingent upon location, gender and often as not age and health.

Evidence for this is easy to find. Action Aid, who has been concerned about the rise in the number of street children in the Northern town of Tamale (currently estimated at about 600) have recently (1996) commissioned an appraisal of their situation.

Interesting studies of this kind provide a **meso** picture bridging the macro world of adjustment programmes with the micro world of extended family and small rural community, In Tamale out – migration of both young men and young women seem to be poverty-driven with a younger generation seeking work in a more fertile South or in towns as male truck pushers or as female headload carriers. Motivated by a need to buy the necessary items for marriage and to support parents remaining at home, we now see a situation in which one generation, the younger, is not only having to look after itself, but is relied upon to support the older. Such a situation has implications for the targeting of aid and the development of effective intervention strategies.

If, street children apart, we accept the Bank's view that growth has led to a wealthier country and this has led to a reduction in aggregate poverty we can still ask the question: has the structural adjustment programme had a positive impact on the development of Basic education in Ghana? In particular has the SAP process improved the position of girls enrolling and remaining in school?

5.1.2 Poverty and Schooling

Pauline Rose (1995) who has recently surveyed the impact of adjustment programmes on female education using a cross-country statistical analysis suggests that:

> *"In countries that have undertaken World Bank – supported adjustment programmes, a slow-down in the increase in average female – combined first and second-level gross school enrolment rates is observed between the pre-adjustment and adjustment phase. Furthermore, there has been an absolute decline in female enrolment rates in a number of adjusting countries over this period" (Rose, 1995 p 1931).*

She also suggests that though the gap between male and female enrolment rates has narrowed in countries experiencing adjustment it has remained the same in her control group of countries, the reason for this being that the average male enrolment rate has fallen toward the lower average female enrolment rate.

In contrast, the gender gap has narrowed in the non-adjusting group of countries due to:

> *"Improvements in the averages of both male and female enrolment rates" (Rose, 1995 p 1944).*

Her analysis suggests therefore that SAP's have had a negative effect on enrolment. Studies of this kind that attempt to compare and contrast complex national scenarios are useful in providing evidence up to a point. As Rose, acknowledges in her conclusions though,

> *" country case studies are required to unravel the factors affecting the supply of, and demand for the education of girls and boys at both the primary and secondary level" (ibid.)*

In Ghana it is not easy to assess the impact of SAP on enrolment partly because the situation preceding SAP was so dire and partly because it is difficult to know if the situation would be any better or worse should a different economic path have been followed.

However, gross enrolment rates have inched up from 76.4% in 1989 to 78% in 1993 at the primary level. It is interesting to note, however, that when, in 1991, the Ministry of Education imposed textbook fees for primary education, absolute enrolments dropped by 3.5% for the first time in a decade (World Bank, May 24, 1966).

The recently completed **Pattern of poverty in Ghana 1988-1992** produced by the Ghana Statistical Service and drawing on data from Ghana Living Standards Survey (1987/88), 1988/89, and 1991/92) provides the sort of quantitative depth required for a fuller understanding of the relationship between poverty and educational development. The complementary qualitative dimension will be provided by our respondents in the latter half of this section.

In terms of enrolment, the survey presents a similar picture to that given by World Bank figures: enrolments have increased steadily since 1987 with an estimated 26% of children not attending school in 1991/92. The authors of the survey echo Colclough (1994) in suggesting that the major reasons, particularly for not enrolling girls in school are economic: the opportunity cost of enrolling girls are higher than those for boys (females spending more time on household chores) and that the perceived economic returns to parents of sending their daughters to school tends to be lower than those for their sons, a suggestion being too that in patrilineal descent systems such as the North of Ghana girls are incorporated into their husband's families, while boys stay with that of their parents (see Eshiwani, 1985, for Kenya and Okeke 1989 for Nigeria quoted in Colclough op. cit.).

A look at net enrolment rates in primary school, by locality, expenditure quintile and gender shows that, though the national macro picture is reasonable in rural Savannah of the North as many as one half (51% in 1991/92) of children of primary school-going age are not in school compared with 11% in Accra.

Figure M - Net enrolment rates in primary schools by locality, expenditure quintile and gender

Locality	Gender	Quintile					All	Poverty status		
		Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest		Very poor	Poor	Non poor
1987/88										
Accra	Male	*300.0	*53.3	*100.0	68.6	100.0	85.2	*60.0	*100.0	85.4
	Female	*0.0	*61.5	*75.0	88.2	80.9	79.0	*75.0	*60.0	80.0
Other Urban	Male	103.8	104.9	108.6	93.6	97.7	102.0	103.4	101.6	101.5
	Female	81.6	79.6	88.4	82.4	86.9	83.6	76.5	84.3	86.0
Rural Coastal	Male	95.0	91.1	76.3	66.7	*76.9	82.2	95.9	93.5	72.4
	Female	64.6	67.6	50.0	65.2	65.6	64.1	65.5	72.7	58.0
Rural Forest	Male	95.7	86.7	101.8	111.3	98.1	98.3	95.1	93.0	101.1
	Female	70.7	81.6	90.9	82.9	71.2	79.8	72.0	74.4	85.2
Rural Savan-nah	Male	59.1	91.2	67.3	68.3	67.4	69.7	60.7	87.8	70.9
	Female	36.9	68.5	67.3	63.0	81.3	59.5	36.8	69.2	71.5
All	Male	86.5	91.5	93.6	88.1	88.9	89.7	86.1	94.5	90.1
	Female	63.0	75.6	79.1	78.4	77.9	74.4	62.4	75.8	79.1
	All	75.4	83.5	86.5	83.4	83.0	82.2	74.9	84.9	84.6

Locality	Gender	Quintile					All	Poverty status		
		Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest		Very poor	Poor	Non poor
1988/89										
Accra	Male	*83.3	*126.7	*112.5	*103.4	118.4	110.9	86.7	133.3	112.0
	Female	*62.5	*115.0	*92.3	*110.7	94.9	97.4	70.6	105.0	101.3
Other Urban	Male	108.9	113.9	110.4	120.9	104.0	112.2	113.0	112.5	111.7
	Female	87.3	81.7	83.1	104.2	92.5	89.3	93.8	72.6	93.8
Rural Coastal	Male	109.8	103.9	114.3	108.3	121.6	111.3	106.3	105.0	116.7
	Female	98.1	88.0	91.1	87.5	71.1	88.1	88.6	94.6	85.7
Rural Forest	Male	105.1	110.8	112.8	127.8	92.6	110.7	106.9	108.8	113.4
	Female	85.8	87.4	113.8	100.0	91.2	95.1	84.2	96.5	100.9
Rural Savan-nah	Male	55.2	58.1	72.4	102.6	131.3	68.9	55.7	62.1	90.7
	Female	31.1	74.3	57.4	94.7	88.9	62.5	36.7	79.2	76.9
All	Male	88.3	97.2	104.9	117.3	108.1	101.9	89.2	100.0	110.0
	Female	72.0	84.9	88.7	99.3	88.4	86.1	73.6	87.0	92.5
	All	80.2	91.1	97.1	107.7	98.1	93.9	81.6	93.4	101.1

Locality	Gender	Quintile					All	Poverty status		
		Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest		Very poor	Poor	Non poor
1991/92										
Accra	Male	*112.5	*148.1	*180.0	146.7	*112.0	138.9	122.2	135.7	142.6
	Female	100.0	*123.8	111.1	115.6	134.3	116.6	113.0	*88.0	124.7
Other Urban	Male	111.9	119.8	126.8	126.3	154.8	125.9	106.4	118.8	132.8
	Female	92.9	116.7	110.1	121.4	121.1	111.8	90.8	104.5	118.4
Rural Coastal	Male	91.9	122.0	123.0	128.0	144.4	119.6	97.6	107.0	128.6
	Female	80.0	93.4	95.8	126.7	128.6	101.1	66.7	103.8	109.1
Rural Forest	Male	126.0	127.8	109.8	124.0	129.9	123.1	125.0	127.8	121.0
	Female	99.3	113.7	114.3	118.8	126.9	112.3	104.7	100.0	119.2
Rural Savan-nah	Male	70.5	76.7	70.3	88.0	98.1	78.0	63.8	81.7	82.5
	Female	46.3	82.8	67.1	52.2	101.8	66.0	44.0	65.5	73.6
All	Male	101.2	113.3	110.9	118.1	130.7	113.0	98.4	110.4	118.1
	Female	81.4	104.7	100.0	102.8	120.9	99.8	80.6	92.7	107.5
	All	91.7	109.4	105.5	110.7	125.9	106.7	89.9	101.9	113.0

Source: **The Pattern of Poverty in Ghana** 1988-92 Ghana Statistical Service, Nov, 1995

Not surprisingly too the proportion of children out of school decreases as one moves up the expenditure quintile and similarly increased urbanisation leads to a decline in the proportion of children not in school.

What these figures tell us that there is "a strong and positive relationship" between enrolment and poverty status with, in 1991/92 for example, 21% of the non-poor out of school compared with 28% and 39% for the poor and very poor respectively. The pattern appears similar in the earlier years.

Figure N – Distribution of expenditure on market-purchased non-food commodities, by commodity type and expenditure quintile – urban areas

Commodity	Quintile					All	Poverty status		
	Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest		Very poor	Poor	Non poor
1987/88									
Tobacco	4.2	3.4	2.9	2.1	2.4	2.5	3.7	4.2	2.4
Soap	12.8	10.9	11.2	10.4	9.1	9.9	12.4	10.9	9.7
Charcoal	13.3	11.5	10.1	9.7	6.5	8.4	12.8	11.0	7.9
Other fuel	5.5	3.8	3.8	2.9	2.2	2.8	5.5	3.9	2.6
Gasoline	0.0	0.8	0.3	0.7	3.9	2.3	0.0	1.1	2.5
Shoes & Clothing	19.4	19.7	20.1	17.3	18.2	18.4	19.2	20.2	18.3
Public Transport	3.2	4.4	5.3	5.4	6.1	5.6	3.7	4.4	5.8
Medicine	5.7	7.3	5.7	5.1	4.8	5.2	5.7	8.2	5.0
Education	13.6	11.3	11.7	11.5	7.7	9.5	13.7	9.1	9.4
Utilities	6.5	6.2	4.9	4.2	4.3	4.6	6.4	5.5	4.5
Others	15.7	20.7	24.0	30.7	34.9	30.6	16.8	21.5	31.9
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Commodity	Quintile					All	Poverty status		
	Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest		Very poor	Poor	Non poor
1988/89									
Tobacco	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.5
Soap	12.4	10.1	10.1	9.7	8.7	9.3	12.2	10.0	9.7
Charcoal	8.6	9.0	9.6	7.9	5.7	7.0	9.1	8.3	6.7
Other fuel	5.2	3.3	2.9	2.9	2.0	2.5	5.0	3.1	2.4
Gasoline	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.6	2.8	1.7	0.0	0.1	2.0
Shoes & Clothing	18.2	21.5	22.2	19.3	18.0	19.1	18.6	21.9	18.8
Public Transport	4.1	4.9	4.8	5.9	5.6	5.4	4.2	5.0	5.5
Medicine	6.0	4.6	5.2	5.1	4.1	4.6	6.0	4.4	4.5
Education	18.3	16.2	11.8	12.8	7.3	10.0	18.6	15.2	9.
Utilities	6.1	5.5	7.5	6.4	4.6	5.5	5.9	5.9	5.4
Others	18.3	22.2	23.0	26.8	38.6	32.4	17.9	23.5	33.9
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Commodity	Quintile					All	Poverty status		
	Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest		Very poor	Poor	Non poor
1991/92									
Tobacco	1.8	1.1	1.5	0.9	1.0	1.1	2.3	1.2	1.0
Soap	6.9	7.2	7.3	7.6	8.5	7.9	7.1	6.8	8.0
Charcoal	7.6	7.6	7.1	6.6	3.7	5.3	7.2	7.7	5.?
Other fuel	3.1	2.4	2.5	2.1	1.5	1.9	3.7	2.2	1.8
Gasoline	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.3	4.6	2.5	0.0	0.1	2.8
Shoes & Clothing	17.6	16.8	18.8	18.2	16.6	17.3	19.6	17.0	17.2
Public Transport	4.9	7.8	6.6	6.6	7.0	6.8	5.0	6.0	7.0
Medicine	5.6	6.4	6.5	7.5	6.2	6.5	5.5	6.4	6.5
Education	17.2	13.8	12.0	11.7	6.9	9.8	16.8	15.0	9.?
Utilities	7.4	6.9	6.1	5.5	4.0	5.1	7.2	8.1	4.8
Others	28.0	29.9	31.3	33.0	40.0	35.8	25.6	29.4	36.?
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Finally in terms of direct costs there is evidence that the mean parental expense of educating girls is significantly higher than that for boys, at both primary and secondary levels.

Figure O – Gender Differences in Drop out, Attendance and Costs of Schooling: 6-17 year olds

	Current Enrolled Percent	Ever Enrolled Percent	Dropout Percent	Mean Grade* Level Attained	Mean Parental Expense (Cedis)
6-11 Boys	67	75	11	1.7	3413
Girls	59	68	13	1.8	4233
12-17 Boys	66	84	22	6.2	5901
Girls	49	72	32	6.1	644?
Total	61	75	19	2.9	4814

Source: Lloyd and Gage-Brandon, 1992 citing 1987/88 GLSS quoted in BRIDGE, March 1994 p 37

Figure O: Presumably this is mean grade level of those remaining in school, after allowing for drop out.

A possible reason for the higher cost of educating girls might be that girls' uniform expenses, which comprise 26% of direct costs (Lloyd and Gage-Brandon, 1992) are higher (BRIDGE, 1994 ibid.) or perhaps that they are entrusted with food money for themselves and younger siblings?

Opportunity costs are by their nature more difficult to assess but there is evidence that the value of child labour for agricultural domestic and marketing tasks is drawing

children, particularly girls, away from school (Asomaning and others 1994, Brock and Cammish 1991, etc. in Heneveld, W. 1995 p 17).Odaga, A. and Heneveld, W. (1995) suggest too in their review of 'Girls and Schools in Sub-Saharan Africa' that in Ghana there is a trend for rural young girls to be sent to urban areas to become domestic servants for kin and non-kin families (op. cit. 1995 p 18).

As we shall see when learning of young women's and girls' experiences of poverty and schooling an irony of the above situation is that it is often the acquisition of schooling that has enabled women to enter the employment sector thereby requiring them to procure other **younger** rural girls to assist them with child-minding and domestic labour.

This issue was raised at a national seminar on girls' education held in Accra in June , 1995. In discussing child labour delegates at the conference were told that:

> *"Unlike women in the formal sector, women in the informal labour market, find all forms of strategies for coping with their maternal and child care roles as well as their occupation. The most common mechanism employed is by using their children in the home and at the work place".*
> *(Ministry of Education 1995 Ghana p 60)*

We would suggest that evidence seems to indicate that mothers, whether in the formal or informal sector, are more likely to use the services of children drawn from the rural areas or children fostered to them within the extended family network.

It is clear that children, especially those from the poor and very poor families have to work either to help relatives to manage to work themselves or to bring up children or simply to work to sustain themselves and those they care for.

Of 150 street children interviewed in Tamale, 124 (82%) specifically mentioned that they were on the street to earn money for their living. Fourteen children were doing so to support guardians or parents, girls accounting for a majority of these (12) (Action Aid, 1995 p 39). Interestingly evidence seems to suggest too that birth order may well play a part in a child's opportunities in life. In large families the eldest child may be out working so that the youngest or all younger children can attend school: the youngest being viewed as an investment in the future welfare of the family, while older children are involved in current welfare (Ennew, 1993 in Boyden, J. 1996 p 21). Research from the Philippines, and Peru, (reported in Boyden, J. 1996) suggests that whereas in the former the highest number of child workers were the eldest sons or daughters, most of whom came from big families with inadequate and irregular incomes; in the latter the

reverse applied with 33% of street children being third in sibling order, 21% fourth while only 16% the oldest and 15% the second oldest.

It is data of this kind – and none seems to exist in Ghana – that can provide the sort of cultural evidence required to assist those in a position to target development assistance more effectively.

The relationship between poverty and schooling is central to any debate about ways to improve the quality of basic education in a country such as Ghana. A recent comparative analysis of problems affecting girls' education conducted by the African NGO **Forum for African Women's Education (FAWE)** identified poverty as the major problem (of 34 listed by nine focal groups – teenage pregnancy; irresponsibility of fathers; negative customs, beliefs and taboos, and broken homes being the other problems given in descending order of importance). Fay Chung, Chief of UNICEF's Education Cluster at a 1995 Conference on the case for Girls' Education in Sub-Saharan Africa held in Cambridge suggested that:

> *" The major reason for girls dropping out of school in Africa is poverty". (Chung, 1995 p 2)*

As we said at the start of this section poverty is not a God-given state visited upon poor people in hot countries. It is a result of economic and political decisions taken nationally and internationally. The values, beliefs and priorities that guide those decisions are essential components of a scenario that integrates the macro and the micro worlds of the Economy and the Home.

How this scenario is experienced and articulated is what concerns us now.

5.2 Culture and the Economy: voices of experience

In **The Politics of Education, Culture, Power and Liberation** the late Brazilian educator Paolo Freire argues that when talking about and deciding upon contemporary social and political issues we invoke two patterns of discourse: a **language of critique** in which agendas of choice are drawn up, the current situation is analysed, options for action are considered etc. and a **language of possibility** in which decisions are taken, actions are implemented, strategies are carried through.

It is possible in analysing teachers' and children's experiences of poverty to classify their experiences or views of their experiences into two similar categories: the first their

analysis of what Thierry Verhelst calls the " culture of power": a critical understanding of current and past circumstances that bring about poverty and the second, the " power of culture" in which they speak the language of possibility – coping strategies for "managing", ways out of the poverty trap, and solutions tried and tested from experience.

It is possible to arrange the theories that emerged from the interviews, then, under these broad headings:

Figure P – Themes Emerging from analysis of field data:

Language of Critique	**Language of Possibility**
"Culture of Power"	**"Power of Culture"**
1. Poverty and schooling 2. Ill health and Pregnancy 3. Experiencing 'drop out' 4. 'Times past, times present' 5. Urban-rural experiences	1. Coping strategies of girls and young teachers 2. Private schooling

5.2.1 The Culture of Power: experiencing poverty

> *"We Laribanga people will be willing to enter any agreement with the government or any other body which will assist us to increase the production on our farms so that we can assist our girls in school. Our major problem is poverty"*
>
> ***Elders of Laribanga***
> *Focus Group Interview*

> *"Actually in Esseukyr this place is too dry. They don't have much rainfall so they are very poor".*
>
> ***Elders of Esseukyr Village***

5.2.1.1 Poverty and Schooling

Laribanga, rural farming village in the North; Esseukyr, dry fishing community a few miles to the east of the southern town of Winneba. Both villages illustrate the pockets of entrenched poverty that seem to be a characteristic of this country. Though, as we have seen, statistics reflected in the Ghana Living Standards Survey show that more of these pockets are to be found in the North, it is still possible to drive a short distance from a southern urban area and encounter very poor communities.

For these people living on the breadline the major issue told to us over and over again is the payment of school fees.

The following interchange between an interviewer and GB, a newly-appointed teacher from Pomadze village, near Winneba illustrates the problem:

> What does the grandfather [carer of drop out being discussed] have to pay?
>
> *I know the school fees are 1,250 cedis (1 pound = 2,000 cedis approx. Jan 1996). The printing fee is 800 cedis.*
>
> The uniform, do they have to buy?
>
> *Yes, they buy their own uniform and that costs about 6,000 cedis.*
>
> What else does the grandfather have to buy?
>
> *Her exercise books, her own furniture which cost around 5,000 cedis.*
>
> Do they take this away when they finish school?
>
> *Yes.*
>
> But isn't this [provision of furniture] the job of the Government?
>
> *When I was schooling there was nothing like that but now the children have to do all that.*

AA, a mother of a dropout expresses well the struggle of many to find the fees to send their children to school:

> *There is economic hardship all over the place. I am, for instance, a farmer and yet if the rains do not come I get frustrated. Buying books and uniforms and paying fees becomes a problem. The headteachers sometimes assist us in the payment of fees.*
>
> How?
>
> *They spread the payment over one or two moths to enable us to make full payment if the rains don't come to help sustain our farming activities; then we can't make sufficient money to pay our daughter's fees. The solution lies in letting the girl stop schooling. That is what happened in the case of my own daughter, F. I have struggled to see her complete P6, [class six primary] and she should have been in JSS this year but she is at home. I have to buy uniform and pay fees. She didn't partake in the final p6 exam to enter JSS so she is at home…*
>
> *Oh and the men should also be blamed. There should be shared responsibilities – both partners should supplement the efforts of one another.*

Talking with parents and girls in and out of school, it is clear that it is not simply the payment of the school fees (soon to be abolished under Governments "FCUBE" Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education initiative) that creates the problem for high risk families but the associated cost of supplementary and often illegal fees levied by parent-teacher associations, uniforms and money to give the child for food whilst at school.

Nineteen dropout girls were interviewed for this study. Almost all gave fee-paying and/or money for food as a major reasons for withdrawing from school. Below is a selection of statements taken from five girls currently out of school.

AD: *"My parents never gave me money to go to school. My friends buy some food while I look on. This makes me feel very sad".*

AI: *"As long as I have enough to eat I will go [to school] and will not ask [parents] for money".*

CA: *"I had no money to pay for the school fees no school uniform and also no money anytime I was asked to pay for anything at school".*

AA: *"I needed just my exam fee which was an amount of 800 cedis [40 pence]".*

MD: *"I was sent home for fees on Friday and my mother said she didn't have it and that I should wait till Monday. On Monday she told me she didn't have it either so I should stay home".*

The fact that a number of children are dropping out of school for want of the equivalent forty or fifty pence says a great deal about the precariousness of families who simply have no "extra" money to spend on fees or food.

With the expansion of schooling throughout the developing world a situation has arisen where schooling is no longer just for the elite. Richer children now rub shoulders with their poorer cousins. During focus group discussions with girls in school it became apparent how important it was, particularly for girls, to be seen to be **not** poor. J, a teacher from Tamale remembering her primary school days fifteen years ago:

J: *"I was very good in class when I was in the primary school. I was office girl in primary five and the Girls Prefect in primary six. I remember wearing a torn dress when I was in P6. I felt very uncomfortable particularly considering my position as a girls' prefect. When I told my father about it, he kept saying that I was going to leave primary school so I wore a pull-over over it for the rest of my primary school days".*

MM, a headteacher remembers his daughter wanting to "be like her friends from wealthier families"; a number of girls from a Winneba schooling pointing out that fees are often paid by parents to the children but are then spent by them on repairing uniforms and buying food.

Structural Adjustment Programmes in sub-Saharan Africa have introduced into the discourse of aid a vocabulary including terms such as 'cost-sharing', 'community financing', and 'cost recovery'. Two parents, one a headteacher, commented on the implication of this for poor parents and the change they have witnessed since they attended school.

"It is not just the school fees per se but the involvement of the parents in other aspects of the school, e.g. 500 cedis is the fee but schools have become a community affair and parents are to build and furnish the school. This is expensive. This is a real heavy burden for them". (Focus group, of teachers, Winneba)

ZA, a headteacher from Tamale, was then asked about his own schooling:

Was the burden less when you were a child?

Yes, we didn't pay for things. That's why some of the parents feel it is better for the children to go and sell in the market.

It shows 1995 is different from the past. But everyone says Ghana is rich now because your roads are improving.

Yes, but it could have been better to have better schools.

SA, a parent from Tamale added that the poor construction of school buildings meant that parents never knew when they would be expected to raise money for its upkeep.

Traditionally it has been the responsibility of fathers to pay the fees of their children. Evidence from the research indicates that many are abrogating this responsibility, leaving mothers to raise the funds.

Drop out Sister A from Esseukyr:

SA: "When you ask them [other friends] they tell you that their fathers are in other villages and do not pay their school fees regularly so it is difficult to continue schooling".

This raises the question of willingness rather than ability to support a child through schooling. JA, a drop out from Tamale, recalled her limited time spent at school a few years back:

JA: "I remember the financial help we lacked and the mistrust that my father had for me. He would never give us the school fees and we never had enough food while there. He gave us 20 cedis which was not enough".

The belief that girls will marry out of the family and that it is therefore best a girl 'stops and farms' was said to us a number of times.

The counter side, parents sacrificing a great deal to support their offspring through school and college was a recurring theme in the life histories of women teachers:

EO: *"I am from Tamale and from a large family yet, "they preferred to use their money to educate us all".*

PK, another Tamale teacher remembered:

PK: *"My mother had to sell her sewing machine to get me some money to enable me to come to training college".*

It would appear that the situation is now different with more of the costs being passed onto the parents, circumstances requiring greater sacrifices from the adults and, often as not, the child or young student realising that they themselves will need to earn some if not all the costs themselves.

A consequence of a liberalisation of the economy and an encouragement of the free market has been a realisation by many parents that being out of school is more profitable for their child than being in.

What might be called a "get rich quick" attitude is now firmly established in many communities: the girls themselves knowing perfectly well the short term advantages of trading over schooling:

> *"School does not bring money but trading brings money" (Winneba P6 Focus Group)*
>
> *"Some of them [peers] want to get rich quick, they want to acquire (property) as early as possible and therefore to stop school to go into trade, or even to travel elsewhere to find money". (Laribanga JSS Focus Group)*

The poor quality of schooling and increasing unemployment of school leavers only fuels the belief that at a time when schools are calling for more money from parents and community it is a better bet to seek a fortune elsewhere. The traditional respect accorded wealth, particularly in the Central Ashanti and Northern regions also contributes to this. IB, a Tamale headteacher:

> *"Because our people tend to respect wealthy people, children are encouraged rather to get into 'money seeking' adventures instead of school, especially these days when some people leave school without employment. This sometimes discourages them from continuing their education".*

Two consequences of poverty: ill health and early pregnancy also play a major role in keeping girls out of school.

5.2.1.2 Ill health and pregnancy

A recent study carried out in the impoverished Afram Plain's area of Ghana, "Social economic and cultural factors influencing enrolment in school by females in Ghana and the health of children in and out of school" by the NGO **Partnership for Child Development** (1995) suggests that of the sample of the 4,766 children surveyed in the research area:

> *"about half showed evidence of stunted growth...children were generally small for their age...children were generally thin".*

Interestingly there was no noticeable improvement in the health of children **in** school as opposed to those working in fishing and farming, which may suggest that schools have little effect on health or that those out of school, for some reason, do not participate in traditional economic activities such as farming and fishing.

When asked about health, two focus groups of P6 girls, both from Winneba schools, described two instances which may well be typical:

> *"She had a pain in her leg and the headteacher loaned her 3,000 cedis to use to treat herself. The parents did not refund it so she stopped". (Focus Group, P6 girls, Winneba)*

When asked about what happened to her:

> *"She has been given out to someone as a maid and is staying with that person". (Gyahadze Focus Group, P6 girls, Winneba)*

The other group of pupils remember one girl who:

> *"Was not academically good and she also had a visual problem, that is she was using glasses. Unfortunately, for her she broke the glasses and according to her the parents weren't ready to buy her a new pair. Without it she can't see so definitely she had to drop out of school". (Focus Group, P6 girls, Winneba)*

We have raised the issue of pregnancy in the previous section. The experiences of those unfortunate enough to become pregnant whilst at school is universally similar: it is poverty that leads to the circumstances in which girls become pregnant and not some moral laxity on their part.

CS, a teacher from Esseukyr recalling her school days:

CS: *"They did not have anyone in the house who would be helping them: buying them food, exercise books, etc. So they were forced to take some friends,*

boyfriends - and one too was our teacher. So before we got to class six these three girls were pregnant and so they had to stop".

The circumstances of one drop out, AA from Pomadze, illustrates the link between poverty and pregnancy. Aged about fourteen and living with her elderly grandparents (her parents having split up) she was doing reasonably well in class P6 at the local primary school.

At the Easter of her final P6 year, she was asked to pay 800 cedis for "examination fee", charged by the school to cover the end-of-primary examinations which take children into the remaining three years of junior secondary education. Unable to raise the fee she remained at home during the summer term and discovered herself pregnant. At the time of being interviewed she was about twelve week pregnant, had no medical attention, and was fearful and upset of what lay ahead. The father of the child, an apprentice at the local car body shop had disappeared. In July 1996 we learnt she had safely delivered a little boy.

BS, teaching in Tamale, concurred with AA's experience:

"Most dropout before getting pregnant".

The reason for dropping out being the necessity for girls, economically 'at risk' to have to turn to men for support to allow them to continue in school.

It is also worth noting that it is not until JSS year 1, that children learn any sex education, which considering the late enrolment of many is often too late.

5.2.1.3 Experiences of 'drop-outs'

A number of girls in school talked about the economic circumstances of children who had dropped out:

Some are married with children. Others frying gari or trading, others even go to Abidjan.

So what is she doing now?

In fact I don't know. Yes, I remember, she sells kenkey.

Oh, so she gets money from that. How old is she?

She is twelve years old. (Focus Group P6 girls, Laribanga)

Trading in roadside foodstuffs - kenkey, oranges, ice-water - becoming a maid to a relative in an urban area, doing small jobs such as weeding or repairing of fishing nets, perhaps travelling to a neighbouring city such as Abidjan or Lome seem to be the lot of most girls out of school. The situation of one girl, SM, described by her teacher, RA, shows how a combination of poverty, family problems and a general sense of the futility of schooling characterises the experiences of many:

> OK, you mentioned one SM who has dropped out of school. And she dropped out at age nine. In which class was she?
>
> *Class 3.*
>
> Do you know where she is now?
>
> *She is living in Sankor.*
>
> The village where the school is situated?
>
> *Yes.*
>
> What is she doing?
>
> *She is not doing anything. The children see her at the beach and they come and tell me. I send some of them to call her to come to school and she doesn't come.*
>
> Why did she drop?
>
> *When she wasn't coming to school, I sent someone to go and call her and she told me she doesn't have money to pay her school fees so I sent another girl to go and tell her that I will pay the fees for her so she should just come to school but she wouldn't come.*
>
> Do you think she is just not interested in school?
>
> *I think it was to do with the problems she was having at home..."*

The most 'at risk' children seem to be those like SM who come from homes where one or both parents are deceased, ill, or working elsewhere, leaving the child to be cared for by an aunt of grandparent. A number of children seem to be caring for themselves.

A, a nine year old drop-out interviewed in Winneba:

A: *"Yes I was very good at school".*

> Why did you stop?
>
> *My father died and we went back home to Prampram (a village 50 kilometres east of Accra). My mother had no money to see me through school so I stopped.*

The fact that the payment of school fees seems to have become the mother's responsibility means that if paternal death or divorce should occur a child is often at risk. RB, an elder from Winneba also points out that:

RV: "When a marriage ends and there are kids the woman always try to get the children on her side. But already she is not having the funds to care for them and she continues with the intention the law may help her".

A small girl from a class six group in Gyahadze somewhat mournfully told us:

"I look after myself as I am alone now. My father is on his farm but I do odd jobs, hiring my services to whoever needs it. As I am alone now I must care for myself".

Such a situation has implications for strategies to improve the position of vulnerable children. It may be that more assistance should be given to children in school who are managing in some way to avoid impoverishment and gain an education. There also appears to be evidence that in supporting mothers, particularly in the direct and indirect costs of schooling, a greater impact will be achieved.

5.2.1.4 Times past, times present

Talking with women teachers and with girls in school, and a few out of school, there is a strongly held view that economically times are much harder now. This is curious given the fact that when many of the women were going through school, Ghana was experiencing its nadir in terms of economic performance (i.e. 1970's and 1980's). Generally, it would appear that though on a macro-scale Ghana experienced an economic depression at this time it is remembered as a period in which social services were maintained: the quality of schooling was high, teachers were expected and performed conscientiously, and the financial burden felt by parents and community was lighter than that experienced today.

AA, a teacher from Tamale sums it up well:

AA: "Education has become expensive. Children in the past went to school without too much demand from parents. The parents were in charge of their school uniform and occasional contributions, but today parents pay school fees and other kinds of fees, buy furniture, books, pens, chalk and lots of things. If these extra costs are excluded we should be able to care for our children in school".

CA, a Tamale dropout, takes the view that the current hardships were unforeseen:

CA: "Many of us didn't foresee that the trend of things in the country would change and thought life would remain as it was - easy and simple".

Of course it is possible that a major problem of the economy in the late 1970's and early 1980's was that it was over-reaching itself in trying to provide free education for its citizens. It also has to be remembered that a higher proportion of children are now enrolled in schools.

Several of the teachers considered times much harder now and that economic difficulties make the work less enjoyable:

RA: *"Life wasn't so hard as these days. You see these days because of financial problems you go to school and you will be thinking of your children at home and perhaps you have children who have no father or you have a husband who is not working or even if he is working the money is not sufficient and so with all these problems at the back of your mind I don't think you will have time to enjoy the teaching as it was in the old time".*

The rate of inflation now, the cost of basic health services (once free), the array of payments required by schools and Parent Teacher Associations, and the general sense that everything seems to cost more are the things that appear to make life hard for the Ghanaian teacher and parent in the late 1990's.

There is also a sense, expressed by parents particularly, that children are more sophisticated now and aware of the difference money can make. MM, a headteacher from Laribanga took the view that:

MM: *"Children are very exposed to money and are spendthrifts so they don't appreciate any amount given to them to go to school because others have more and so girls end up following boys who eventually impregnate them. Children think they should have all that their friends have, regardless of the financial position of their parents. We were taught to be content with whatever we were given. Even food. These days children even refuse food prepared by their parents and go to buy something else".*

5.2.1.5 Urban-rural life

The lure of money is associated for some, probably correctly, with the growing divide between life in the rural areas and town life.

A number of teachers and parents thought that schooling was actually more expensive in the urban areas - PTA's tended to levy higher fees for example - because parents tended to have more disposable income; towns also being places where children are exposed to the "fancy life" and tempted into crime and various money-making activities.

What we seem to have in Ghana is a situation in which economically the gap between the rich and poor is widening, mirrored to some extent in the North-South, rural-urban divides and at a time when the costs of sending a child to school are rising.

The break up of the traditional family, pregnancy amongst schoolgirls, the difficulties facing single parents and children caring for themselves are all part of the fabric of a nation experiencing poverty. Though the language of critique is at times bleak, it is in the experiences of those interviewed that we also encounter the language of possibility - coping strategies and mechanisms for survival that provide us with avenues to explore in trying to remedy the situation.

5.3 The Power of Culture: experiencing possibilities

In spite of the cost of schooling and the economic hardship suffered by so many, education is still viewed as a worthwhile investment. Whereas in the past with education viewed as largely 'free' parents were willing to send as many of their children as they could to school, today there is a much more discriminating attitude to financing children through the initial nine years of Basic Education.

'Failure' at school e.g. doing badly in an examination (and it has to be remembered that the 1995 criterion referenced achievement test which sampled 5.4% of the total national enrolment only 1.8% reached the criterion level of 55% in mathematics and only 3.6% in the English language) or not gaining employment at the end of the Basic Cycle, is perceived as a "waste of resources" by many parents. Dropping out through pregnancy is an added reason given for this view:

AA: "It is important that girls should complete their schooling but after a hard struggle some eventually end up becoming pregnant so whatever expenses you made to see her through goes wasted especially when one considers the cost of fees, uniform, books".

This parent, AA, takes the realistic view that:

AA: "If after studying the effects would be in vain and end in pregnancy, then the best way out is for the girl to stop schooling and engage in weeding, trading or to learn a trade rather than wasting money".

An elder from Winneba, EA takes the view that:

EA: "it would be a better result if used to educate a boy".

5.3.1 Coping Strategies of girls and young women females

By pushing more of the real costs of schooling upon families and communities a situation is emerging, perhaps a healthy one, in which parents are questioning the "commodity" being bought. However, when such discrimination is adversely affecting the education of girls over boys, such a strategy needs to be countered.

A number of women teachers also took the view that teaching is no longer seen as a financially rewarding career and as such is only worth continuing with until something better comes up or an opportunity arises to move out of the classroom and follow a course of further study.

VC who teaches at Esseukyr suggested to a young secondary school girl that she consider teaching as a career. She replied:

> *Ah, but what have you got since you started teaching? I will never teach".*

A reduction in the school fees, as proposed by the Government of Ghana, was viewed by many as a way forward; communities being willing to shoulder a reasonable economic burden in supporting their children through school. A number of other sensible suggestions were made for cost-sharing or making the payment of fees by parents easier:

ZA: *"We attempted to solve the problems by asking parents to pay fees by instalments". (Headteacher, Tamale)*

EA: *"I therefore, suggest, that the government should institute a scheme of giving loans to farmers to help them make some income so they can look after their children, who in turn will be good citizens of the country". (EA, Parent, Winneba)*

VA: *"They, the Ghana Education Service, should (especially in the villages) where the parents have made up their minds that they aren't going to educate their daughters, provide items such as books and uniforms at moderate prices". (VA, Lamptey Teacher, Gyahadze)*

Currently it is Parent-Teacher Associations that are used as the mechanism for raising monies to support various school expenses such as furniture, cement blocks for new classrooms, sports equipment, etc. The fact that these levies are often exorbitantly high (and in breach of guidelines laid down by district education offices), and compulsory for all parents of children enrolled in the school means that with the forthcoming

proposed fee-free education, PTA's may well end up needing to raise more revenue should Government inadequately fund education at the school level. *

GB, a young teacher from Pomadze village recounted in her life history interview how she had supported herself through every level of schooling and through teacher training college by trading.

It was her advice that:

GB: *"the girls use, say three hours to trade to support their parents because of the financial position here".*

Girls supporting parents and relatives and girls working to fund themselves through school was commonly given by teachers and the girls themselves as the most realistic way to survive.

MA, a dropout from Pomadze, was the sole breadwinner in her grandparents' home. Earning from 100 to 300 cedis a day by selling iced water and oranges along the roadside she:

> *"gives part of the money to my grandmother and uses the rest for feeding...I am the breadwinner".*

More disturbing were the situations in which relatives, knowing older girl pupils are able to "get something from men" ask, for example:

DA: *"Esi, give me 20 cedis so that when I get money I will refund to you". (DA, Headteacher, Winneba)*

Poverty once again is a major reason for parents having to rely on child labour. HB, a headteacher, in the poor village of Esseukyr:

HB: *"We have crabs people trap for sale so sometimes you see a child in school going to the bush to trap crabs for sale. Why? Because the parents are poor and are unable to support him very well. Sometimes you may not see the child in school because they say to the children, if you don't go to the beach, there will be nothing for the evening so manage and go...you see the problem is still economic".*

* Each pupil according to the GLSS pay 100 cedis as 'culture' fees, 200 cedis as 'textbook user fees' compared to the government approved fees of 50 cedis respectively. Mean household expenditure on education is given as 748,000 cedis, 2% of total spending by household per annum. BESIP policy document, Ministry of Education, Ghana, April 1996.

The resourcefulness of girls and young women to fund themselves through school and college was a feature of the focus group discussions with girls in school and women teachers newly graduated from teacher training institutions.

CT, a young teacher, remembers living with her aunt and husband at Saltpond when a child:

CT: *"He didn't want to pay my school fees so I had to stay late in the night preparing toffees and groundnut cake until I could get some money to pay my school fees for one year..."*

MA, a particularly successful teacher in Winneba found herself at a young age having to find ways to pay for school fees:

MA: *"It was a big problem for my mother so we were forced as children to help with the selling especially at weekends. One of us would be selling bread and another cloth, because we were twins. We were going outside the village to sell. It was how we earned our living. At some point in time we used sugar to make toffees to sell so that we would get money to pay part of our school fees. Our uncle who convinced my mother to send us to school promised to buy us the school uniforms. Because we were twins we had to struggle hard to pay fees because we were too many. My mother couldn't bear it alone so the responsibility of caring for the other children was our".*

A number of girls in discussion in school argued that:

> *"girls should respect their mothers and help them sell their goods so that they can pay the fees". (ACM focus group p 6 girls)*

At one point when sitting with the local paramount chief of Pomadze-Asebu traditional area, we raised the question of whether the community generally shouldn't, say establish a scholarship fund for needy pupils:

Chief: *"There are people in the community who have no children; they have passed the child-bearing age, so when you tell them to contribute something towards somebody else's child's education, they will not see the urge or importance for doing it. After all why should I contribute money towards somebody else's child's education?"*

It has to be recognised though that many successful women teachers only became so because of their willingness to combine schooling with petty trading; and likewise that, if currently, many girls did not trade the dropout rate from primary and junior secondary schools would be higher. Making school time-tables more flexible to allow for **some** work after school hours, during fishing catches and at harvest time, for

example, might well be a way to relieve some of the financial burdens currently being faced by the school children and their parents.
The teachers life histories reveal too the resilience and resourcefulness of many Ghanaian women to overcome poverty.

AP, a much respected senior headteacher of AME Zion school in Winneba has first hand experience of the struggle to manage:

> *"When my father died and my mother came I was living with my mother but then because she wasn't working and my grandmother too was sick, I had to struggle. There were times when I closed from school and there was nothing to eat. My mother tried preparing doughnuts; so when she wasn't at home I took a little and made porridge, sometimes even without sugar, and after eating I rushed to school..."*

The ability of teachers to manage financially by combining teaching with additional work is well illustrated by a Pomadze teacher, GB:

> *"We close at about twelve thirty in the morning. I then start my trading at about 3.30pm to 4pm, then close at about 6pm and come home.*
>
> Were you tired thinking about the morning teaching and then trading in the afternoon?
>
> *Yes, but because of the situation I was in, I had to do it. Even then I was providing for my little sisters since my auntie wasn't ready to do so.*
>
> Did you find time to prepare your lessons?
>
> *Yes, I was doing that in the evenings, but it was a weekly affair, so I was doing that on Sundays".*

This is from a teacher who began her career as a pupil-teacher augmenting her salary by selling kitchenware and clothing to fellow teachers and who continued to do so when she managed to gain entry into a teachers' college.

The average monthly take home pay of a primary school teacher is 75,000 cedis or £40 at the current exchange rate. Once transportation from home to school has been paid (approximately £8 per month) and daytime lunch expenses are deducted, a young teacher has little left with which to begin a trading enterprise. It is interesting to compare salaries with those paid to teachers thirty five years ago. David Brokensha's pioneering anthropological study of **"Social Change at Larteh, Ghana"** (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966) mentions that:

> *"the fifty four teachers in Larteh receive a total of about £15,000 per annum in salaries, an average of £280 for each".*

At the 1996 exchange rate this would be about 700,000 cedis per annum which is not a lot short of what today's teachers receive. Ghanaian society, like others in the developing world, is one which traditionally holds its teachers in high regard. But as RA of Tamale remarks, things have changed:

RA: *"Teachers are honest and respected. The bad aspect is poverty. We are not regarded very much in society because of our poverty".*

A particular difficulty faces headteachers who often find themselves caught in the middle between parents and children unable to pay the fees and the educational authorities determined to collect their revenue.

Two headteachers, MM of Laribanga and ID of Pomadze both told us that if enrolled children are permitted to remain in school without payment of fees the money is deducted at source from the headteacher's salary. The latter teacher, ID had taken the very Ghanaian step of adopting the child who was unable to pay. As a colleague, CM told us:

CM: *"He says he has taken the child to be his own so he doesn't feel it much. And he is a nice boy and clever too".*

Another of the headteachers, HB from Esseukyr pointed out that as a headteacher it was his duty to encourage parents to send their children to school, yet:

HB: *"The problem is that when you show the way you are going to provide the money for the parent .You say the child should go to school but will you buy the school uniform?"*

5.3.2 Private Schooling

Paradoxically, a coping strategy for an increasing number of parents is to do what more than 40% of Accra parents are doing and that is to pay more for their child's education by enrolling them in a private school. The following extract of a conversation between one of us and ID, the headteacher of Pomadze indicates why many parents regard private schools a better investment:

> So they have three terms making a total fee charged of 45,000 cedis a year (approximately £20). Why are people paying it? If I gave you 45,000 cedis would you send your child there?
>
> *Yes.*
>
> You would, why would you want your child to go there?

Everybody wants the best education for his or her ward.

I want to ask you, why is it better?

Because the institution is a private one and the proprietor pays them well. He expects the teachers to work hard and if you don't you are sacked.

And in your school if the teachers don't work hard, do you expect them to go home?

Well, here, I can't ask him to go home only I have to point it out to him or her to do well.

Is there anything about the other school that is worth the 45,000 cedis apart from the teachers working hard?

Yes, during last year's B.E.C.E. examination, it was the Winneba International School that topped the whole Gomoa district.

The profitability of owning a private school was noted by more than one teacher interviewed. AP, a Winneba headteacher nearing retirement and CT, a colleague from the same school both have plans to open their own schools. For AP it would be:

"a private school right from crèche, nursery and primary level".

With pensions related to current low salary levels and with an increasing number of parents willing to take this route of securing for their children a quality education it is easy to see why teachers working in the public sector are considering opting out to the private.

Couple this with a World Bank "conditionality" that private education should be encouraged in Ghana it appears a sensible move to either own, work in, or send a child to a private school.

As long as schooling is primarily viewed in economic terms, be it the costs of supporting a child or the economic return expected when the child graduates, parents and children will continue to look for ways to finance themselves through the education system. Paradoxically as Ghana, nationally, experiences a revival in its economic fortunes the financial difficulties of many parents and teachers are greater than they were in the past.

Culture though is not just a description of the way things are but the behaviour and strategies of individuals and communities to overcome their most serious difficulties. As we have seen, a number of people have suggested ways in which Government can relieve the burden put upon parents and the children themselves.

So far we have looked at the home life of the child and the poverty framework that shapes participation in school. Perhaps the most important set of experiences, for the educationist anyway, is what happens at school. It is to the culture of the school that we now turn.

6. The Culture of Schooling: Life Experiences of Schools, Teachers and Pupils

In particular he [Professor Robin Alexander] criticised the 'conceptionally untenable' failure to see cultural factors as intertwined with teaching methods. "Life in schools and classrooms is an aspect of our wider society, not separate from it: a culture does not stop at the school gates. The strengths of our primary schools are the strengths of our society; their weaknesses are our society's; their tensions mirror and illustrate the fractured and unstable nature of British culture in the late 20th Century".

Nicholas Pyke
Times Educational Supplement
Times Newspapers, London, 21/6/96

"Primary education in Africa is in crisis"

Ward Heneveld

"Planning and Monitoring of the Quality of Primary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa"

AFTHR Technical Note 14
World Bank, March, 1994.

6.1 Introduction

In March 1994, the Ghanaian Minister of Education, the Honourable Harry Sawyer gave the opening address at a one-day National Forum on, "Basic education to the year 2000". Standing before teachers, headteachers, circuit and district supervisors, Ministry of Education officials, and donor representatives, the Minister established the purpose of the forum:

"Since 1988 we have been able to reorganise the financing and rehabilitate the infrastructure of the education system. But today we see that this is not enough. In spite of the excellent work that has been started, pupils are not learning what is expected. The great majority of primary-6 pupils are functionally illiterate in

English and Mathematics. Without functional literacy, pupils won't gain comprehension and skills in other subjects, they won't be prepared for further education, nor will they be prepared for the world of work. How can we justify continuing expenditures on expanding a system that doesn't lead to learning? Reaching a target of universal participation in primary schooling is not a sensible goal unless the participation leads to learning and skills. To examine strategies for providing basic education, to revitalise the teaching and learning in the schools – that is the focus of our policies, and of this forum".

Those gathered on that hot day in Accra had set themselves a difficult task: apart from the criterion-referenced test referred to earlier, which in 1992 only 1.1% of children answered more than 55% of the items in mathematics and only 2% answered more than 60% in English; examination results at senior secondary level in 1993 sent a shock wave through the educational establishment. Of 42,105 students who took the Senior Secondary School (SSS) certificate examination in 1993, 3.9% passed in nine subjects and 12.9% passed in seven or more subjects. Only 1,354 of the total 42,105 candidates qualified to enter university (Fobih D.K. 1995). Though university entry requirements are not necessarily the best indicator of quality of an education system they do confirm the low standard of attainment of those passing through the nation's schools.

Much has been written on reasons for this malaise and even more, mostly in the form of Government reports and donor appraisal studies, on ways to improve the system. It is not the intention of this section to reprise the problems and run through intended reforms but rather to examine the culture of schooling and the way that culture – which is a reflection of social norms and values – frames the problems, policies and possibilities for educational betterment.

In Section two we suggested that it was possible to view schools on three levels: the transrational (where values are conceived as metaphysical based on beliefs, ethical codes and moral insights); the rational (where values are grounded within a social context of norms, customs, expectations and standards); and the subrational (where values are experienced as personal preferences and feelings). We went on to say that values and norms are not only manifest at these three levels but at the individual, group and organisational level also.

With a particular focus on the rational level i.e. an understanding of values as expressed through curriculum objectives, norms, rules, daily practices etc., we hope to be able to show the culture of schooling is far from 'neutral' but rather determines much of what is wrong and equally indicates where the solutions are to be found.

6.2 Background and Context

Given that we are concerned with the lives of Ghanaian teachers and pupils, it would seem useful to divide background information into three areas: The institutional life of the school, the life of the teacher and the life of the child. In the world of the first we can include references to the systematic factors that shape the nature of schools and the policies to reform them..

6.3 The Life of the School

In 1963 the anthropologist David Brokensha described the schools situated in the town of Larteh, in the hills north of Accra:

> *"The buildings range from the modern, airy, well-constructed Local Council Girls Middle School to others which are made of 'swish', sometimes with leaking roofs and overcrowded classrooms, with three children squeezed on a bench meant for two. Generally the standard is fair, for financial grants are conditional on adequate buildings. The personality and competence of the headmaster or headmistress are reflected in the state of the building and of the grounds, for all schools have available in the pupils a supply of free labour, and it usually requires efforts, organisation, and enthusiasm rather than funds to keep the school buildings and grounds in a pleasing state. Some schools, such as the Methodist Primary, have rather cramped accommodation with no space for recreation, but others are well laid out with ample room for fairly level sports fields and other recreational and agricultural facilities".*

Brokensha, D.

Social Change at Larteh, Ghana

1966, Oxford Clarendon Press pp 239-240

Thirty three years on it is instructive to contrast his picture with that of Richard Kraft's team who surveyed a range of schools in June, 1995 for the USAID.

> *"Teachers, headteachers and community members are unanimous in their placing buildings, furniture, toilets and other infrastructure issues as the top priority. To state that the infrastructure of schooling is in desperate need is to understate the problem. Half of the schools visited, not only has an inadequate building they had no building whatsoever. In the "Photo Essay" accompanying this report, we have shown mud, tin, grass, fern, tree, and thatched schools, in addition to more conventional block, wood and brick buildings. Furniture was all but non-existent in many rural schools, and if the children wanted to sit on other than rock, they had to bring their own furniture from home. We observed hundreds of children, many of whom had no breakfast, go six hours without a drop of water and nothing to eat. The bushes and trees surrounding many "schools" were a significantly cleaner environment than the disastrous toilets and urinals we photographed. Only in the best private school visited, was there any evidence of meaningful physical activities,*

sports, playgrounds, music or art. With the exception of a large dirt or grass area, occasionally with a goal or basket, most rural schools have no recreational facilities. Other than the strangely out of place "western" drum, schools were devoid of musical instruments. In the heat of the midday, children started to sleep and lose interest, to the extent that many headteachers just closed school at noon. Some thirty years ago, psychologist Abraham Maslow wrote of the hierarchy of needs, suggesting that until our basic needs, such as food, water and shelter, are met, we have a difficult time concentrating on higher needs. We unanimously concur that it is all but impossible for a hungry, thirsty, tired, hot, ill child to learn. When teachers lack even a chair or table, to say nothing of such "luxuries" as a book shelf or locked cabinet, it is safe to say that the teacher's basic needs have not yet been met, and until they are, it is unlikely that they will have the time or energy to become like the minority of creative, talented teachers who grace so many school settings in Ghana. These outstanding teachers somehow overcome extreme deprivation, but the less superhuman, need their basic needs met if they are to succeed".

Figure Q:

Esseukyr Primary School, Winneba, Ghana

Pomadze - Asebu Primary School, near Winneba, Ghana

Zion Primary School, Winneba, Ghana

Gyahadze Primary School, near Winneba, Ghana

Recently some efforts have been made to build houses for headteachers at some remote primary schools, though this policy has come under criticism by the village communities. Why pay 7 million cedis they would argue to house one person when pupils and teachers must survive in dangerous classroom sheds open to the vagaries of weather? (Fobih, D. 1995)

Of particular concern to parents, educationists and aid personnel are the poor learning outcomes and limited instructional time offered to students.

We have already made reference to the poor performance of pupils at the 1992 and 1993 Criterion-Referenced Testing Programme. Three other studies provide additional statistical evidence:

a) **The Ghana Living Standards Survey**
This study indicates that in 1988/89 i.e. at the beginning of the Ghana Government's education reforms, pupils in p6 could not read and were barely literate. The GLSS found that only 32.5% of the population above 8 years of age were literate.

b) **The Avotri Study**
This piece of research was undertaken in 1991/92 of over 1,000 pupils studying social science subjects – 700 following the old curriculum and 475 in the new JSS. The major conclusion was that students following the old curriculum fared significantly better than those following the new curriculum.

c) **Centre for Research on Improving the Quality of Primary Education in Ghana (CRIQPEG) research into the acquisition of English Language Skills amongst selected Ghanaian primary school children.**

CRIQPEG have assessed reading, writing and oral abilities of more than 1,000 children in 14 schools. A major finding is that most children could answer questions and follow instructions but could not respond orally in English. In reading pupils could not read more than a third of the words presented to them. In writing less than half of the pupils were able to write 15 or more words. Causes seemed to be a lack of encouragement to speak English outside the classroom, lack of English reading materials at home, a fear by teachers and pupils of "damaging" books, and little exposure to print. (Conference presentation, October 1995, University of Cape Coast, Ghana).

Lack of instructional time seems to be a major problem. If we compare Ghana to a selected number of other countries we can see that significantly less time is spent by children at school.

Figure R - Length of School year in hours/year in selected countries (World Bank, 1993)

Country	1st year	6th year
Benin	1080	1080
Burkina Faso	1290	1290
Cameroon	1024	1024
Congo	900	900
Ethiopia	1230	1230
Ghana	800	800
Nigeria A	1128	1128
Nigeria B	666	666
Japan	1440	1440
USA	1080	1080

Source: Kraft, R. et al 1995 p 15

If we now look at measures to assess the proportion of that time devoted to 'academic learning time' we can see that, at most, Ghanaian children are spending only a quarter of a short day learning anything. Given the lack of electricity in most schools and year round high humidity levels there is a case to be made for either **reducing** the time spent in school i.e. focusing attention on the early hours of the day or continuing with the present arrangement but endeavouring to increase academic learning time as a proportion of the whole.

Figure S - Use of Time in Schools

Estimated Use of Time in a School Day and Year	Hour(s) per Day	Year
Academic Learning Time	0.6 - 1.5	108 - 270
Engaged Time	1.5 - 3.5	270 - 430
Instructional Time	2 - 4	360 - 720
Allocated Time	4.75	855
Attendance Time	5.4 - 6.0	970
Total Available Time	6.0	1080

Source: Kraft, R. et al 1995 p 16

If much of what has been described so far frames the quality of education delivered to Ghanaian pupils, there is still one issue that seems to make a significant difference: the way in which teachers teach. Teaching methodology, as an issue in raising education

quality, is surprisingly often disregarded by teachers and those working in the Aid sector.

In the teacher motivation study (GES/UNICEF op. cit.) and Kraft, R. (op. cit.) study referred to earlier, 'recognition as a good teacher' and 'better teaching/teachers' were accorded 25% and 11% respectively as priorities for motivating teachers or improving school quality.

Another study (Asare-Bediako et al, 1995) draws on a sample of 30 schools to discover the nature of in-service training for Ghanaian teachers. It reveals an interesting picture: it is mostly in the subject areas such as Mathematics, English and Life Skills rather than teaching methodology that support is given. This is further confirmed in the way various in-service bodies such as the Ministry of Education's Curriculum, Research and Development Division (CRDD) are organised with members recruited because of expertise in a subject area rather than skills in improving teaching methodology.

Figure T - Number of Schools where teachers received in-service training in these subjects, out of a sample of 30 schools from all the survey districts

Subject	No. of Schools
Teaching Methodology	2
Orientation for New Teachers	1
Record-keeping	1
Reading skills in English & Ghanaian Languages	1
Mathematics	18
English	16
Life Skills	9
Science	7
Agricultural Science	5
Social Studies	4
Vocational Skills	4
Ghanaian Language	
Cultural Studies	
Technical Skills	
Teaching of Arabic	

Source: Asare-Bediako, N. et al **Quality Assurance and School Level Management: A review of the Management System for Basic Education in Ghana.** USAID June 1995.

Further evidence is provided too by our involvement in the development of an innovative B.Ed for Basic Education through distance learning at the University College of Education at Winneba. In spite of moves to integrate subjects more at primary level and to focus on methodology rather than content, students enrolled for the degree will opt for subject areas of study. much of the material being developed is also very

academic in nature with little attention paid to the learning child and his or her environment. When questioned about this colleagues expressed the view that teachers were traditionally trained for any level and still needed to be specialists in particular disciplines. Though knowledge of how teachers teach is generally scanty some evidence exists from the developing world showing that it is possible for teachers to change classroom culture particularly with regard to methodology. Case studies in Levin and Lockhead's (1993) collection **Effective Schools in Developing Countries** show how change can be initiated in conditions of stringency. The CIEP (Integrated Centres of Public Education) of Brazil, for example, were actually designed for 'economically disadvantaged' students. They were characterised by a classroom pedagogy which stressed dialogue and debate; a collegial method akin to Freirean educational philosophy and an attempt to heighten community participation (Davies 1995).

The average Ghanaian classroom is very different with many of the core cultural values described in chapter three translating into how the teacher behaves and how he or she expects the children to learn.

Very little research evidence exists with regard to pedagogical strategies in Ghanaian schools though it is clear from the Kraft, (1995) study that a great deal of the time is spent by the teacher in chalk 'n' talk with little priority given to pupil discussion, evaluation or group work. It is also clear from the research that the Government policy on using a Ghanaian language as medium of instruction for the first three years of schooling is being overrided in favour of using English and that a gender bias exists in the way the teachers interact with boys and girls in their charge.

Figure U - Analysis of Ghanaian Teacher Behaviour

Classes Observed:	p1=13, p2=5, 03=10, p4=13, p5=5, p6=17, JSS1-1=10
Minutes of Class Observed:	4385 minutes, 73 minute average observation
Subjects Observed:	Reading=6, Writing=12, Speaking=4, Science=8, Mathematics=19, Physical ed.=0, Social Studies=6, Agriculture=0, Cultural Studies=2, Life Skills=5, Ghanaian Languages=5, Technical Subjects=2
Classroom Activities:	Teacher Presentations=49, Recitation by pupils=30, Discussion by full class=7, Individual Student Work=19, Group Work=4, Evaluation/Testing=4, Chalkboard by Teacher or Student=21
Language Used in Class:	English=35, Ghanaian Language=8, Both Languages=17
Questioning of Males/Females:	Majority of Questions to Males=25, to Females=15, Even or not observed=20
At-Task Behaviour:	76% of Time

Source: Kraft, R. et al (1995)

In September 1995, the Government of Ghana launched its farsighted and eagerly awaited programme for the development of Basic Education. Within a framework of Free Compulsory Universal Basic education (FCUBE) the Government pledged itself to reform education by the year 2005. Specifically it intends to remedy four areas of weakness:

1) **Access** to basic education services must be expanded for all school-age children, but especially for girls and citizens living in disadvantaged areas and who, for social and economic reasons have not yet sufficiently partaken in the educational process. The Ministry has established a target of equalising gender balance in the number of entrants to Basic Standard (BS) -1 by the year 2000 and to equalising BS-6 completion and BS-7 entry by the year 2005. The Government of Ghana is committed to universalising entry into BS-1 by the year 2000 and to achieving an overall 93 percent completion rate at the BS-6 level by the year 2005. If successful at the lower level, the number of entrants into BS-7 is expected also to reach 92% by the year 2005 and an 87% completion rate attained for BS-9 in the same year.

2) **Efficiency** of the education system must be improved along several dimensions if the objectives of FCUBE are to be met. Repetition and dropout rates must be reduced substantially and targets of 1 percent reductions annually at each grade level have been established. In combination with the access objectives, accomplishment of these targets should realise near universal Basic Education by the year 2005 with priority emphasis given to girls and historically disadvantaged groups.

3) **Quality** is a necessary complement of improved access to Basic education services. Changes that have been proposed to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process are expected to increase the pass rate for admission into Secondary Cycle institutions to 80 percent by 2005. By the same year, 75 percent of BS pupils will meet minimum standards of performance on national criterion referenced tests.

4) **Relevancy** of Basic Education will be increased through quality improvements in the curriculum and by strengthening community participation in the oversight of local schools. Curriculum reform will enhance the relevancy of schooling to meet better the social and economic needs of communities and the country.

The Strategic plan is composed of five integrated elements which will be developed and implemented in a comprehensive but carefully sequenced fashion in the ten year period

between 1996 and 2005. The elements of the Plan include: Infrastructural Development, Management Reform, Curriculum Change, Community Participation, and Improvement of Quality of Personnel who support the basic education process at all levels. The strategic framework of the FCUBE initiative including the relationship between interventions and targets is depicted in the following diagram.

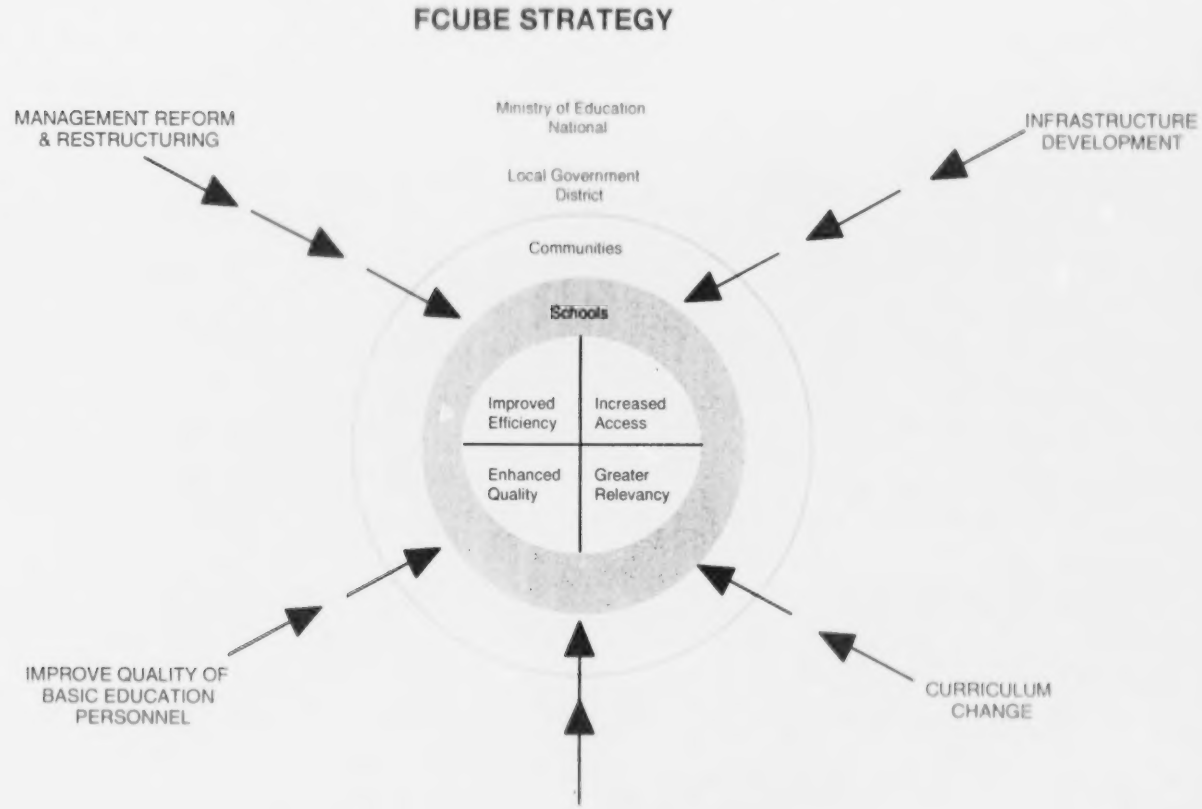


Figure V: FRAMEWORK OF FCUBE INITIATIVE

To what extent these ambitious plans will achieve the stated objectives remains to be seen. Much will depend on the ability of the school as an institution to change its culture. Only then will children gain any benefit from their education.

6.4 The Life of the Teacher

In March 1995, the Ghana Education Service in collaboration with UNICEF published a report examining the motivation of teachers and associated conditions of service. (**A Study of Teacher Motivation and Conditions of Service for Teachers in Ghana.** GES/UNICEF, Accra, Ghana - March, 1995). The study reported nine major findings which frame the life of the teacher:

1) **Though a significant number of young women (aged between 2 and 34) are employed at the primary end of the education cycle as one moves further up the system fewer women, e.g. 14% teaching at secondary school level, are represented.** This corresponds with International evidence which shows that about half the teaching force are women at primary level, a third are to be found at secondary and 24% at the tertiary (an improvement from 17% in 1985) (King, E. & Hill, M.A., 1993). This evidence not only shows the discrimination facing an ambitious female teacher but the limitations in establishing role models of success for girls attending school.

2) **School - community relations, appear to be complex.** The Ghana research indicates that there exists some confusion about who is responsible for maintaining the school. With community financing of schools uncertainty seems to persist too with regard to construction, repair of buildings, and provision of learning materials. Interestingly teachers surveyed outlined a role for the community that was somewhat restricted and framed more around infrastructure, policing student attendance and/or discipline. In contrast community leaders were more creative in the ways they examined the relationship defining a broadened role that included teacher discipline, providing incentives to teachers such as financial assistance to those newly-transferred in the running of the school (GES/UNICEF, 1995, p 29). In general community leaders interviewed were more positive about the existence and effectiveness of the school - community partnership than the teachers who, in their opinion, were not doing a good job.

3) **Most teachers live in rented accommodation and many of them live far from the school. Housing it seems, is a crucial factor in how a teacher feels about his or her work.**

Figure W - Housing for Teacher (% of Teachers)

	All	Pri	JSS	SSS	UR	S-u	Ru	Rem
Ownership								
Government	7.4	0.3	0.9	63.3	20.2	6.8	0.5	0.0
Rented	72.1	75.3	84.4	26.5	65.5	74.6	73.9	79.2
Owner Occupied	6.1	8.4	1.8	2.0	3.4	5.1	8.7	4.2
Family House	11.5	13.2	9.2	6.1	8.4	9.3	15.2	8.3
By Community	1.3	1.4	0.9	2.0	0.8	2.5	0.0	8.3
With Friends	1.6	1.4	2.8	0.0	1.7	1.7	1.6	0.0
Construction								
Wall - Mud or Stuck	32.1	40.3	22.9	4.1	6.7	22.9	47.6	83.3
Brick	21.7	21.2	29.4	8.1	13.4	34.7	20.0	12.5
Bamboo	0.4	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0
Cement	45.5	37.5	47.7	87.8	79.0	42.4	31.4	4.2
Other	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Roof - Roofing Sheets	94.8	94.1	97.2	93.9	95.8	95.8	95.1	83.3
Clay	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0
Grass	3.4	4.5	1.8	0.0	2.5	2.5	2.7	16.7
Other	1.6	1.0	0.9	6.1	1.7	1.7	1.6	0.0
Floor-Cement	88.3	87.5	95.4	77.6	85.7	94.1	89.1	66.7
Mud	8.3	11.5	3.7	0.0	4.2	4.2	10.3	33.3
Wood	0.4	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.5	0.0
Titles	2.9	0.3	0.9	22.4	10.1	0.8	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Electricity	40.5	27.0	52.8	91.8	89.9	33.6	17.5	4.2
Water	21.2	16.8	21.9	45.8	49.6	8.9	11.2	13.0

Source: GES/UNICEF op. cit. 1995 p 9

A quick glance at the table illustrates the disadvantaged life style of the primary school teacher over those at the two higher levels. In other words if one is teaching in a remote primary school the likelihood is that accommodation will be basic mud or stick walls with no electricity or running water. It is no surprise that a majority of teachers' college graduates express a desire to teach at the Junior Secondary or Senior Secondary level.

4) **Teachers expressed little knowledge of Government policies towards education with a result that many felt disempowered and marginalised.** In the Ghana survey, teachers indicated that it was via a teacher union official or a circuit supervisor that news of any policies was communicated. Only 10% of teachers learnt of new developments from their headteacher.

5) **Research internationally (Hawes and Stephens, 1990) illustrates the important role a headteacher can play in educational development.** In Ghana a majority of headteachers (of the 88 heads interviewed 85 were men) felt they needed, a) more training, b) better office equipment and c) more resources. A number of headteachers expressed frustration at their superior's inability to act on reports of teacher indiscipline.

Generally headteachers in Ghana are reasonably well qualified (93% holding the Certificate 'A' teaching qualification) and experienced - 67% of heads having 20 years or more teaching experience.

6) **Availability of learning materials were generally poor.** Most teachers surveyed i.e. 91% had no access to textbooks for teachers, 95% indicated that their classrooms had textbooks in them for children to use, with 50% of primary school teachers reporting no teachers' guides available for use. Syllabuses tended to be available though many teachers (almost a third interviewed) indicated that lack of appropriate textbooks and instructional materials were one of the things they most disliked about teaching.

7) **Teachers were generally unhappy about the rooms in which they were required to teach.** As we have seen earlier the physical condition of many primary schools leaves much to be desired and, in some cases constitutes a risk for those teaching and learning within.

8) **Teachers and headteachers appear dissatisfied with their salaries and benefits; although most recognised that the Government is unable to significantly increase their salary.** Of the 17 motivational items given which might improve the life of the teacher, not unsurprisingly a better salary, more teaching and learning materials, and more in-service training were ranked highest.

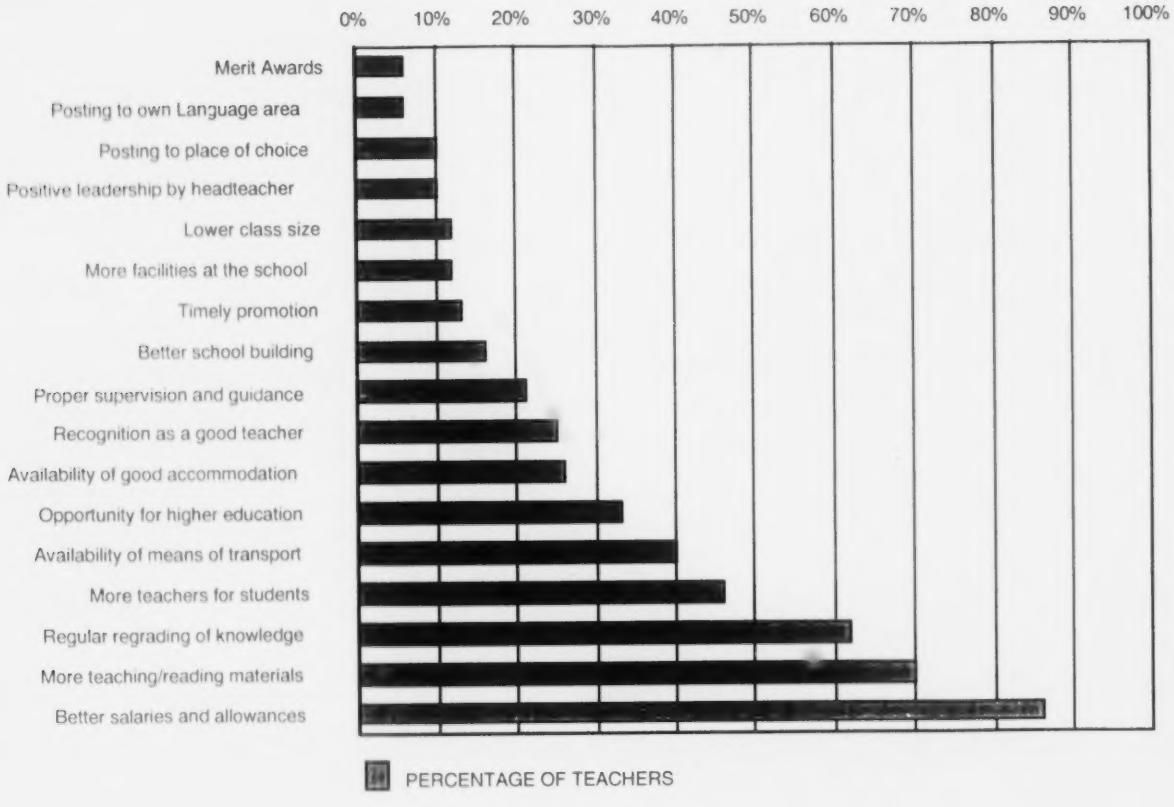


Figure X: MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS FOR TEACHERS
(All Teachers)

Source: GES/UNICEF op. cit.

It is worthwhile comparing this data with that produced by Kraft, R. et al (June 1995).

Figure Y -
Priority recommendations for School Improvement by Teacher and Headteachers

Zone %/ Recommendations	South %	Central %	North %	Accra %	Total %
Total # Surveyed	49	21	30	33	133
1. Student/teacher Desks and Chairs/ Chalkboard	40 (82%)	13 (62%)	16 (53%)	17 (52%)	86 (66%)
2. Teaching/Learning Aids	28 (57%)	18 (86%)	11 (37%)	24 (73%)	81 (61%)
3. Textbooks	27 (55%)	16 (76%)	14 (47%)	17 (52%)	74 (57%)
4. Building Improvements	22 (45%)	9 (43%)	22 (73%)	15 (45%)	68 (51%)
5. Teacher and Headteacher Accommodations	17 (35%)	10 (48%)	21 (70%)	10 (30%)	58 (44%)
6. Recreation/Fields/Sports	11 (22%)	14 (67%)	16 (53%)	12 (36%)	41 (31%)
7. Library/Supp Readers	9 (18%)	4 (19%)	16 (53%)	12 (36%)	41 (31%)
8. Toilets/Urinals	9 (18%)	13 (62%)	4 (13%)	11 (33%)	37 (28%)
9. Bookshelves/cabinets	17 (35%)	12 (57%)	1 (3%)	5 (15%)	36 (27%)
10. Drinking water/bowls/cups	13 (27%)	6 (29%)	12 (40%)	4 (12%)	35 (26%)
11. Bus/Bicycles/Motocycles/Funds Teacher/St. Transport	2 (4%)	7 (33%)	18 (60%)	7 (21%)	34 (26%)
12. Class Size	8 (16%)	6 (29%)	7 (23%)	6 (18%)	27 (20%)
13. Health/Infirmary/First Aid	5	11	3	5	24 (18%)
14. Science/Math Labs/Equipment	9	6	5	3	23 (17%)
15. Electricity/Clock/Computer/Lang. Lab/AV	6	6	6	4	22 (17%)
16. PTA/Parent Involvement and Visits	10	0	2	9	21 (16%)
17. Maps/Globes/Charts	4	4	10	3	21 (16%)
18. Teacher Guides	4	1	1	14	20 (15%)
19. Technical Wkshps/Tools/Sewing/Draw.Bds	11	0	4	6	16 (12%)
20. Better Teaching/Teachers	5	2	1	6	14 (11%)
21. Stationery/Workbooks	3	4	2	6	13 (10%)
22. Staff/Visitors Room	9	1	0	3	13 (10%)
23. Relationships Parents/Teachers/Pupils/Heads	3	2	2	4	11 (8%)
24. Canteen/Store/Food	5	0	3	3	11 (8%)
25. Secure Windows/Doors/Walls	8	1	0	2	11 (8%)
26. Curriculum Improvement	1	3	2	3	9 (7%)
27. Maintenance/Floors	6	0	0	3	9 (7%)
28. Teacher Salaries and Incentives	2	1	2	3	8 (7%)
29. Agric./Gardens/Tools	2	1	2	1	6 (5%)
30. Improved Supervision	0	0	1	4	5 (4%)
Total # Surveyed	49	21	30	33	133

Asking very much the same question as these researchers we can see that though teaching and learning aids are ranked high, better salaries and incentives and supervision are accorded different priority weightings by those interviewed.

9) **Teachers appear to be reasonably happy with opportunities for staff development, though many recognised the fact that what they learn in work-shops and seminars has a marginal effect on learner achievement.** In terms of workload and class size the picture from Ghana is varied. Though many of the teachers interviewed talked of large classes data indicated below, show that class size is very much an urban phenomenon. The data also revealed that at least half of the primary school teachers taught between 50-59, 30 minute periods per week. Between 15% and 25% of teachers expressed satisfaction with their workloads.

Figure Z -
Average Size of Class
(Teachers with class size 70 and above were excluded)

	Urban	Semi-urban	Rural	Remote	Average
Primary	44	36	26	17	31
JSS	48	40	30	11	37
SSS	49	39	-	-	45
Average	47	37	27	16	34

The research also says something about gender and the teaching profession. What is revealed is also an indicator of cultural attitudes towards men and women working within the education system.

Though a majority of male and female teachers thought there was no gender discrimination in the profession:

> *"a significant number of men had perceptions that were negative and stereotypical including; women came late to school, they were lazy and engaged in unhelpful conversation during school hours". (op. cit. p 30)*

With the exception of four out of the 446 teachers surveyed, teachers categorically said that they would hire a man over a woman in spite of parity of qualification. Some of the reasons given were:

> *"Men are more resourceful, they quarrel less, are more helpful, are more energetic, have more leadership qualities, are smarter; women have mood swings, they are gossips, cause confusion because men teachers may express an interest in them". (op. cit. p 31)*

Given the strong gender-based responses about women teachers, the teachers' answer to who made a better headteacher - man or woman - was a little surprising. Significantly more teachers answered that women generally did. Most thought that women were more patient, strict and less biased. Interestingly, several teachers (all men except for one woman) answered that women were more trustworthy particularly in terms of school financial matters.

6.5 The Life of the Child

> *"We need not have worried about arriving an hour late, shortly after nine am, as the Headteacher had not yet been able to make it through the mud on his prized bicycle and only three of the seven classes had a teacher present. We found some 150 children sitting quietly at their desks, waiting patiently in hope that a teacher would teach them that day".*
>
> *Kraft, R. et al (1995)*
>
> ***A Tale of Two Ghanas: The view from the Classroom***

We have already touched on the issue of attendance but it is worth looking at the question, for a moment, from the child's perspective.

Richard Kraft and his team found that though the mean class size is just under thirty children enrolments varied class by class between a range of 22 and 196 with a dramatic decline as one progresses up the school. The enrolments and pupil-teacher ratios of the Northern Region of Ghana given below illustrate the fact that the Ghanaian child's likelihood, particularly if female, of completing nine years of basic education is still slim.

Figure AA -
Class Size and Number of Teachers in Four Northern Schools

District	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Kanga 4 teachers	119 – One Teacher	23 – Teacher/HT	19 – Shared Teacher P4	15 – Shared Teacher P6	12 – Shared Teacher p6	6 – Shared Teacher P5
Natugnia 4 teachers	130 – shared Teacher p2	66 – Shared Teacher P1	53 – Teacher/HT	52 – One Teacher	48 – Shared Teacher P6	30 – Shared Teacher P5
Sakai 4 teachers	25 – One teacher	26 – One Teacher	24 – Shared Teacher P4	28 – Shared Teacher P3	14 – Shared Teacher P6	27 – Shared Teacher P5
Wa	61 – Two teachers	64 – Two teachers	62 – Two teachers	55 – Two teachers	56 – One teacher	56- One teacher

Source: **Kraft, R. et al op. cit.**

Enrolments of children in one of these schools is illustrative of the problem of keeping children in school.

Educational Enrolments at Primary School in Kanga P1-P6

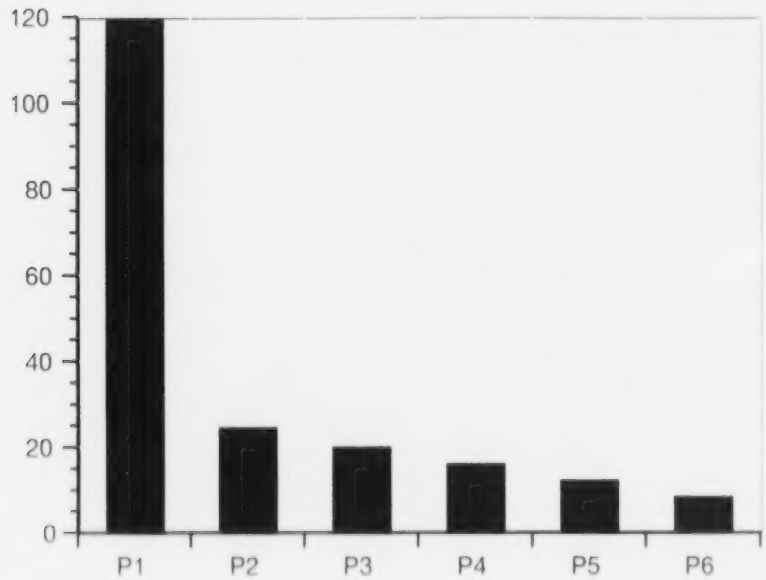


Figure BB Source: Kraft, R. et. al. op. cit.

The picture for Winneba in the Central Region is more encouraging and highlights the variations in access and quality issues from area to area in Ghana.

The picture for Winneba in the Central Region is more encouraging and highlights the variations in access and quality issues from area to area in Ghana.

Figure CC - Educational Enrolments at Primary School in Winneba P1-P6 1991-1994

	No. of Schools	P1			P2			P3			P4			P5			P6			Total		
		B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T
1994-95	18	567	578	1145	621	576	1197	601	538	1139	541	535	1076	472	465	937	487	438	925	3289	3130	6419
1993-94	17	627	617	1244	602	541	1143	571	516	1087	534	530	1064	502	407	909	460	439	899	3296	3050	6346
1992-93	19	610	519	1129	519	471	1011	504	471	975	489	422	911	425	421	846	420	387	807	2967	2712	5679
1991-92	17	580	576	1096	479	463	587	399	463	862	424	431	855	404	422	826	370	367	737	2352	2662	5372

Source: District Education Office, Winneba, 1995

Note: Comparability of drop out has reduced from 47.69% to 33.6% and for girls from 37.5% to 18.7%
Generally % increase in Enrolment from 1990-91 to date is 18.36%
Girls enrolment increased 16.4%

Before leaving the issue of enrolment it is worth mentioning the problem of late enrolment and the subsequent difficulty 'older' children face particularly when they sit with younger classmates in the upper primary classes.

An analysis of one all-girls school in Winneba indicates that in one first year class eighteen out of fifty children were enrolled late; in class p6 thirty one of forty-five being older than the enrolment age.

Figure DD –
Don Bosco Catholic Girls, Winneba

Class P1	Class P6
Enrolled:	Enrolled:
1979 – 2	1985 – 2
1980 – 3	1986 – 5
1981 – 7	1987 – 11*
1982 – 8	1988 – 13
1983 – 11*	1989 – 17
1984 – 3	
1985 - 2	* = year of entry for age
Not known 8	

Source: School enrolment via class registers, April 1996.

Children in the poor Afram Plains area of Ghana were asked about the things they liked and disliked about school. They liked to learn to read and write. They enjoyed sweeping the compound and conducting assembly and playing sporting games. They disliked caning, feeling bored and hungry, weeding (it made them tired) and carrying firewood (Fentiman, A. 1996).

The resilience of children in getting to school and then remaining there, with or without a teacher, chair or learning materials says much about the indomitability of the individual to try and make something of his or her life.

As we shall see when examining the experiences of children in school, they too are aware of what they lack and, like their teachers, are quite capable of producing realistic and imaginative ways forward.

6.6 The Culture of the School: voices of experience

As with the previous two Sections it is possible to cluster various experiences into a smaller set of thematic units. If we employ the broad headings used so far: school, teachers, and children it is possible to group the factors that have emerged from the

interviews and observational data in the following way:

i **School-related factors:** the general life of the school, school-community relationships, vocational skills education, the issue of corporal punishment, school-based solutions to drop-out.

ii **Teacher-related factors:** the life histories of teachers, coping strategies, aspirations.

iii **Child-related factors:** children's value/perceptions of schooling, issue of over-age children, aspirations and coping strategies.

6.6.1. Experiences of School Life

To gain an overall picture of a Ghanaian primary school it is a good idea to ask the headteacher to provide a snapshot of his or her school. The picture below illustrated with recent photographs is balanced in showing the strengths and weaknesses and corroborates the picture presented in the earlier reported Kraft, R. et al (1995) report.

"You are witness to the condition of the building - constructed in 1944, it should have been renovated or repaired. We have only 3 classrooms and an incomplete structure built through the efforts of the Chief and his elders. They have promised to complete it when they visit home during the forthcoming Christmas.

We don't have enough furniture - three pupils occupying a desk meant for two. Some pupils bring their own chairs from home - in class one all the seats including kitchen stools are brought from home by pupils.

The windows are open which makes it difficult to display apparatus in the classroom as they are removed by the next day. It has also made it possible for a mad man to sleep in the school, and he may even destroy what has been displayed. That's why the classrooms are bare. The roofs leak.

We have a school band and a set of jerseys which go to make the children happy. The pupil population is not bad at all (possibly in comparison with a nearby village school) because children have access to these facilities.

Our teachers are more regular, as testified to by our attendance book - because of that the children are also regular though it wasn't like that when I first came. The pupils were coming at anytime they liked because the teachers themselves weren't regular and the pupils imitated them. Today, for instance, I was here by 7.00am and yesterday, I came by 6.50am and I told those who came by 7.30am that they were late and I had wanted to punish them. They begged me so I set them free.

By 7.00am the compound had been cleaned and we had gone in for singing by 7.30am today. There has been an improvement in the life of the school". (JB, Headteacher, Gyahadze primary school).

We can compare this view of one Central Region school with that, provided by one of the research team, of the Laribanga school in the Upper West, northern region of Ghana.

"The compound didn't look attractive. It seems the school has a loose atmosphere. There is not much furniture in the rooms either. Most children in this village prefer to go for Islamic studies with the 'big' malam to going for secular systems of education. Though [the school] is old, not much has been achieved because there has always been lots of drop-outs and past pupils of this school never climb very high on the educational level. To attend JSS pupils have to walk 8 kilometres for a round trip which makes 16 kilometres in all. This is probably too much for some of the girls". (Summary picture of Laribanga Primary school).

Laribanga Primary School
Northern Province, Ghana

DM, a teacher at AME Zion school, Winneba remembers a terrifying incident from her childhood:

> *"When we were in class one, I remember we were in a wretched shed and one day it broke on us and we had to be fetched from the wreckage".*

Talking with headteachers and parents it seems that many primary schools are founded, often by a religious denomination, when there are enough pupils collected together in need of an education. HB, headteacher of Esseukyr school remembers the early days of his school:

> *"When you want to establish a school the important thing is the pupils. When you get the pupils, the next thing is the building and classrooms. When the building is there you have your office, cupboards etc.; then your decision will come through".*

Schools, as institutions, begin therefore when children are collected together, something attested to in the number of children being taught under trees and makeshift shelters whilst awaiting the "decision to come through".

Esseukyr Primary School,
Near Winneba, Ghana

After the striking range of buildings in which teaching and learning occurs, the most notable characteristic of Ghanaian primary schools is the academic nature of the institution; learning is not perceived of as an 'easy' or enjoyable affair, it is a serious business and one in which those who succeed do so, not because of having been taught necessarily well, but because they possess innate abilities and have therefore adjusted easily to the prevailing ethos of the school.

ID, headteacher of Pomadze, considers his children are learning now:

ID: *"because the teachers don't want them to relax, thus the academic standard is improving".*

'Academic' is defined clearly as 'knowing something' and being able to respond well to a teacher's questions. Children who 'cope up' in class are seen as 'brilliant', the ones who don't as 'weak' and 'unacademic'. Predictably a number of the girl drop-outs fitted into the latter category. AH, a drop-out from Laribanga:

> "Suppose you had someone to pay your school fees would you continue schooling?
>
> *No.*
>
> Why will you not go to school despite getting a sponsor?
>
> *I am not intelligent and that makes me feel shy.*
>
> Is that why you will not return?
>
> *I feel my friends will laugh at me for not knowing anything.*

VN, another casualty from Gyahadze village gave an illuminating if sad view of life at the local school:

VN: *"When I was in school, I tried to appear very beautiful in my uniform yet I was academically poor. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't make it. My father is quite well-to-do and encouraged me and yet I couldn't cope with academic work. My father gave me everything as if I was in secondary school, which my life-style even suggested and yet I couldn't continue...in this village some girls have finished junior secondary school but cannot speak English. They refuse to speak it to enable those who know it to correct them. Some appear as if they have never stepped into a classroom".*

For AA, a Tamale headteacher:

> *"If a child is brilliant she or he can cope, whatever be the situation".*

Core cultural values in these schools are essentially the traditional ones: respect for

knowledge, a belief that some are 'strong' and some are 'weak', and that learning is something that is serious and 'bookish'. With the predominate teaching methodology of the teacher training college being the lecture method it is understandable that there should be a synergy between traditional views towards epistemology and the way children should be taught.

There is also a connection between the widely-held view that learning is an academic activity and the quantity and quality of learning materials found in schools.

A striking difference between schools in Tamale and Laribanga in the North and those surveyed in Winneba and surrounding villages in the South is the amount and quality of resources found in Southern schools.

The elders of Laribanga believe the situation has deteriorated:

> *"I think our time was better than now. This is because we were not many in school and the Government supported us with materials. So even if your book got finished you could go to the office for a new one. But now if your father can't buy books for you, then you have to stay out of school." (A Focus Group, Elders, Laribanga)*

Talking with teachers and parents gives a strong impression that the provision of resources is strictly the concern of government and the educational authorities. Joanna, a young teacher from Tamale recalled being bored during her first teaching position:

J: *"I was bored because we had no teaching aids but the headteacher told us to ask the children to bring some of these aids themselves. It was after that, that work seemed better".*

What this reveals is the strong power-distance factor that operates in schools such as the one in which Joanna teaches. As such it is those senior teachers who are expected to provide, be it resources or ideas. It is interesting for example that it isn't until the headteacher suggests a line of action that a way forward is found.

The strongly authoritarian nature of school management pervades the education system. ID, the headteacher from Pomadze, in a rare example of candour sums up the situation:

ID: *"those of us who are teachers feel there are some lapses here and there but the authorities do not allow us to voice it out, so we have to keep quiet".*

Such an institutional and systemic culture has implications for introducing change and encouraging initiative.

Lack of resources, for whatever reason, has an immediate knock-on effect on teaching:

"because of the lack of materials they only do the theory". (Elders of Laribanga)

Private enterprise and the trader, ever present in Ghana, has a solution to the problem. HB, the Esseukyr headteacher considers that there has not only been change for the worse in the quality of textbooks provided but also in the way they are being procured:

"The type of textbooks we were using in those days I feel they were quite good. This time you see people selling books at stations and in lorries; they are the old books. They have taken extracts and are selling them. "First Aid in English" and a lot of these pamphlets people are selling but when we study them carefully they are all extracts from old books..."

For some the situation has improved. DV, a teacher from Laribanga believes:

"the present system is better. This is because in the past we used to learn irrelevant materials by heart. The syllabus of today is relevant to the children".

AA, headteacher of Winneba's Catholic girls school also considers things are improved – her school possessing:

"...good buildings, we've got furniture, good personnel, almost all of them being trained teachers. They therefore realise that the school is well equipped and well staffed".

She also considers single-sex education more beneficial, the atmosphere being calmer than that in a mixed school, allowing girls to mature until they enter the mixed junior secondary school.

The question of language used as the medium of instruction is an interesting one. A number of teachers made specific reference to the importance of learning English, associating academic progress with mastery of the second language:

ID: *"Every parent would like to hear his or her child speak English at an early age. That is their understanding. They associate English with schooling".*

V A-L, of Gyahadze School uses English as a motivator in her classroom:

V A-L:" I tell them why they are in school and why I am there – I was posted there to help them grow up and become like me so that when they are in school they should learn. I didn't get that type of treatment so I wanted to help them to know how to speak English and that I didn't know it before, we are all learning it so they should speak it whenever they can. They were happy so if ever I caned them they began to laugh because they know they are learning something".

It was also said to us a number of times that one of the reasons why schools in the north performed better than those in the south was because of the policy in places like Tamale for using English from class one as the medium of instruction.

A view exists too that this 'straight for English' approach is short-sighted, evidence being given of higher standards having pertained in the past. **The Ghanaian Times** addressed the issue in May of this year (1996):

> *"If English remains the national/official language, then it must be proficiently written and spoken i.e. the English language syllabus should insist on a progressive development of 'educated English'.*
>
> *That is right. But the "Times" does not accept what sounds like teachers' calling for making English the medium of instruction even in the first three years of primary school. The better quality of English in the older days was not attained through this, because English was not the medium of instruction in primary one to three.*
>
> *...In the older days, primary pupils were taught their dialects, but English was seriously taught and learnt as a subject even at that level. That is what must be re-examined now".*

What is interesting is the fact that in spite of massive investment in identifying the ills of the nation's education system hardly any attention has been paid to the language policy particularly during the first three years of primary education.

A particular feature of school culture is the grappling with hasty implemented innovation. For Ghanaian schools this is no better illustrated than in efforts to introduce continuous assessment throughout the nine-year Basic Education Cycle. The problem of maintaining a fair and effective examination system irrespective of the means of assessment mean that this type of innovation has had little chance of success.

CA, a drop-out from Tamale who now works as a hairdresser, discontinued her schooling because of the inefficiencies of the assessment system:

> *I first wanted to go the secondary school but my father advised me rather to finish form four (the final year of the then 10 year of Basic Education) and get into Teacher Training College but I dropped that idea.*
>
> Why didn't you go to the college?
>
> *We were the last batch of the old system of form four and somehow our final year exam results were never released.*
>
> Did you find out why?
>
> *Yes, I was told they were cancelled.*
>
> What did you think of doing then?
>
> *I thought of being a teacher as my father advised but because I had no certificates for my Basic Education, I had no admission into college so I decided to do hairdressing.*

AA, headteacher of Catholic Girls Primary School, Winneba describes continuous assessment thus:

AA: *"Yes, we have exams every three weeks for our continued assessment and another at the end of the term".*

There is little evidence that anything other than the above operates in primary schools; teachers being in the most part unaware of how a properly instituted continuous assessment system should work, particularly the philosophy of learning lying behind it.

Teaching – learning strategies, the curriculum, continuous assessment are all subject to massive review in Ghana at present. Daily various ministerial bodies sit in meetings and at workshops facilitated by external aid advisers and well-intentioned non-governmental organisations. Most of these meetings occur in the capital and are attended by middle-ranking Ministry of Education officials and occasionally by teachers selected from various districts. ID, headteacher of Pomadze school was asked if the curriculum of the school could be changed to suit the needs of the child more:

ID: *"Yes, it's paper work, so in a way it could be changed".*

Real change i.e. in the way teachers teach, assess pupils, or arrange their classroom will need to take account of a traditional classroom culture which in some ways protects itself from the avalanche of reform and innovation by mostly not knowing about or ignoring advice from the capital.

To gain an idea of life for the average Ghanaian child we spent several days as a 'fly on the wall' at one Winneba primary school.

Below are extracts from a day spent with one class, 6B of Don Bosco Catholic Girls School, Winneba regarded by many as a 'good' school.

Class 6B – D. B. Catholic Girls, Winneba

6th June 1996

8.45 am **Cultural Studies**
Teacher absent, 49 girls sit in classroom with no work to do. Light filters through holes in breeze block walls. No pictures on wall.

9.15 **Fante**
Teacher arrives and writes passage about health in English on blackboard. Children to translate.

9.28 Chorus clapping for correct answer.

9.33	Books distributed. Children now copy "correct" translation into books. Teacher tells us she is "guiding" pupils by writing "correct" translation for them to copy.
9.37	Teacher goes outside.
9.40	Tells us "some officers are coming to inspect my work". Goes out. No instructions left for class. Children begin murmuring.
9.44	Girls continue copying off blackboard and when task finished book placed on teacher's desk.
9.45	A monitor starts distributing another set of exercise books.
9.50	Teacher returns and with back to class starts marking pile of exercise books on her desk.
9.54	Teacher leaves room again. Children continue to chat. One or two rest their heads on their arms.
9.55	Teacher returns and continues to mark books. Teacher appears to be copying out ideas from a textbook into her exercise book (for inspectors' visit?) Nothing happening now. More children put heads on desk.
10.00	One or two girls restless now. Teacher continues writing. Begins raining. Children become animated.
10.07	Monitor erases earlier passage off blackboard.
10.15	Break. Girls walk slowly outside.

When asked what the children were expected to do whilst she was writing at her desk the teacher told us they were to discuss the topic 'my best friend' for the following week. Out of earshot, when asked, a pupil told us she had only asked them to sit quietly and wait for break.

Later in the morning we watched the girls enjoy a physical education lesson conducted by a student teacher (who told us she wasn't encouraged by college tutors to try and teach new things) and then an English lesson which involved question and answer drills on 'a telephone conversation' taken from the set text. During this lesson the pattern was similar to that seen elsewhere i.e.:

1. teachers introduce content
2. children individually answer questions posed by the teacher
3. chorus clapping as a form of praise
4. teacher writes exercise on blackboard
5. children write the answers into rough books and then copy a corrected answer into a neat workbook.

6. teacher walks quietly around the class or sits marking the steadily growing pile of rough books.

The characteristics of the lessons are:- teacher-centred, content driven, assessment by means of answering correctly and copying out neat answers, whole-class instruction with no pair or group work. At no time were efforts made to relate one subject with another or to relate the work with the child's own world (the paucity of telephones in Winneba is itself an issue of relevance).

Later in the afternoon, visiting the boys school, we watched a teacher introduce some drama into a social studies lesson about a local deer festival. Much to our surprise the children were organised into two teams representing the town war companies and rushed out of the classroom, arriving later with a somewhat startled goat tied hand and foot and representing the festival deer ready for sacrifice! Excited and animated the children obviously enjoyed the drama with the teacher suggesting they draw a picture, at home, of the capture of the goat/deer.

Teaching though for many is a profession where:

RD: "You have to talk a lot". (Pomadze school)

Many of the teachers when interviewed suggested class sizes were much larger than those indicated in official statistics.

Learner difficulties in reading and writing appear to be a major school-based reason for girls dropping out of school. The following interchange between interviewer and a group of Winneba P6 girls is interesting for its analysis of the problem and reasonable solution offered:

> *"Some can't read in class so they are afraid they will be asked to read so they play truant and go to the beach to beg for fish to sell.*
>
> *Some stay away from school because they are very poor academically.*
>
> What do you think this school can do to encourage girls to stay in school?
>
> *We want our madam (class teacher) to put those who can't read together and given them special lessons in reading, this will help them and then they will be interested in coming to school". (Focus group, P6 girls Winneba)*

Interestingly it was only from the focus group interviews with the girls themselves that we heard of solutions relating to teaching methodology or classroom organisation.

Teachers and headteachers were much more likely to mention lack of resource or insufficient training as a problem in raising quality.

The issue of classroom discourse illustrated in the classrooms observed was referred to by a number of children who had dropped out of school. For, SF responding to a teacher required courage:

SF: *"In school, I realised that when a question was being asked in class and I knew the answer, I wouldn't raise my hand to give the answer at all. With some of our teachers if you didn't answer rightly you received a punishment. I was very shy to give the answer – even when I knew it I felt it was wrong".*

Finally, in terms of the curriculum, many interviewed bemoaned the lack of resources now which rendered practical subjects such as home economics shadows of what was once taught quite well in the past. Sewing, craftwork and cooking, it would appear were once carried out practically in most schools. Now it appears a lack of resources has meant it is only taught theoretically.

School- community relations seem characterised by misunderstanding, mistrust, and at times hostility.

A common situation often involves a teacher disciplining a child and the parents misunderstanding what has happened. A P6 girl from a Winneba school describes one such incident:

> *"There is another girl called GA – we had in class 5. She was insolent and the teacher warned her so she went home and lied to the mother and the mother came to the school to abuse the teacher and the girl didn't come to school again. She sells gari now". (Focus Group P6 AME Zion, Winneba).*

At Gyahadze school, another P6 girl, reported similarly:

> *"Sometimes the teachers go to report a theft to the mother who may become angry, lose her temper and rain insults on the teacher. In such an instance the teacher will tell the mother that they will not teach her daughter again and she drops out". (Focus Group P6 girls, Gyahadze Primary School)*

Even potentially positive actions by teachers can cause problems. JB, headteacher of Gyahadze primary school:

> *"I bought a football to the school to be allowed to play even after 4.30 pm. But just yesterday a parent came to complain that her child has now stopped going to help her at the farm".*

A major problem with most schools is that the academic culture has meant that few children acquire useful skills necessary for finding employment at the end of the nine years of compulsory education or earlier should they withdraw.

SA, a Tamale parent, suggested:

SA: *"The government employs our children when they leave school or helps those dropping out to learn a craft or trade, so that they can at least be self-sufficient".*

RA, a Winneba teacher, warned girls thinking of continuing their education up to the sixth form level. Far better, she thought, for young women to learn a trade or gain specific qualifications for entry into a profession such as nursing or teaching. When asked teachers, parents and children considered dressmaking, hairdressing and cooking useful for girls; carpentry and farming being viewed as useful for boys.

The issue of corporal punishment is one that probably marks out most Ghanaian schools from their Western counterparts. The reasons for employing the cane would also be surprising for a teacher trained in the West:

JB: *"teachers cane when she doesn't submit her homework or is unable to read".(Headteacher, Gyahadze)*

C: *"I had a problem with Ghanaian language and for that reason I was caned", (Teacher from Choggu village, Tamale)*

So why did you drop out of school?

AD: *"The teachers were caning us too much". (drop-out, Laribanga)*

What do you remember about your primary school days?

We were taught songs and caned a lot.

Was that a good thing?

FT: *Yes, because it was better to cane and teach well than to leave us to our fate". (drop-out, Laribanga)*

RA, an experienced Winneba teacher, has cause to regret one incidence of punishment she carried out in her first year of teaching:

RA: *"After giving the girl three lashes, the girl pretended she was dying so you know the other pupils started formulating stories that the girl was dead. I tried but the girl refused to open her eyes meaning she was in a 'secret coma' just to frighten me. So when I advised that she should be sent home to an uncle who is teaching at the Winneba Secondary School, luckily the uncle shouted on her and the girl out of fear rose up. So after that incident things haven't been easy and it is something I will never forget".*

This incident reveals something too about the relationship between adult and child in the classroom and the fact that many teachers find it difficult, if not impossible, to distance themselves from their professional role. An 'insult' to the teacher is therefore an affront to the individual person rather than something to be understood professionally.

Paradoxically a number of parents and teachers expressed the view that indiscipline is a problem now in many schools because, unlike in the past, parents are more educated and believe that their children shouldn't undergo the hardships they suffered at school.

When it came to strategies to improve the quality of schooling many of those spoken to provided sensible and realistic solutions. Ways forward tended to concern two broad issues: first contributions the community can continue to make towards the schools – provision of furniture, lunch-time snacks for the children, housing for teachers; and secondly arrangements made within the school to enhance the teaching-learning process. The girls themselves, as mentioned earlier, were quick to suggest inexpensive improvements in teaching methodology, provision of resources etc.,

> *"We wish there will be a library here for us so that when we are free, we can occupy ourselves with reading". (Focus group, P5 girls, Winneba)*

Another group of girls suggested:

> *"Such girls [those who can't read and write] should be put together and one teacher put in charge of them". (Focus group P6 girls, Winneba)*

A more conventional solution concerns the move from class teaching to subject-based instruction. At the moment it is educational policy that one teacher be assigned to each primary school class to teach all the subjects. A group of class six girls from Pomadze School pointed out the major disadvantage of this approach:

> *"We just sit and have no one to teach us. Sometimes the teacher tells us she might not come to school so when it happens like this the children go to the Junction to sell instead of coming to school to do nothing. We prefer the type of teaching at JSS i.e. to have to have a teacher assigned to a subject". (Focus group P6 girls, Pomadze)*

On visiting the cluster of research schools in Winneba we noticed that this was becoming policy for classes four, five and six, one positive result being that pupils were at least taught for some of the day by one or more teachers.

There was some interest expressed too in returning to a situation where there were some single-sex schools. TY, a teacher from Tamale thought such a move would reduce competition with boys and lessen the joking directed to girls by boys. Certainly the only single-sex school used in the research had a convivial and calm atmosphere.

Reviewing the suggestions for improvements made by teachers and parents there is a strong, we would suggest, cultural view that the provision of more resources, training, salaries etc. will raise standards. JB, a headteacher from Gyahadze goes further suggesting:

JB: *"They should make the schoōl attractive by giving token presents and materials, especially village schools, where inexpensive gifts will encourage the girls".*

Central to Ghanaian and we would suggest many developing country cultures, is the idea of gift bringing. It is expected that strangers bring presents when visiting a village and that a family give food and drink as a sign of hospitality. The provision of social services is often viewed likewise, "they" being thanked by the recipients for amenities such as electricity, medical clinics, and learning resources for schools. It is not uncommon too, for politicians to be seen "giving" such things to a gathering of elders in remote villages.

The high level of Aid in a country like Ghana has also meant that such a culture of gift-giving easily reinforces a particular donor-recipient relationship. One result is that schools are less inclined to innovate with what they have, seeking solutions instead of from those in a position to give.

6.6.2. Experiences of being a teacher

Thirty nine headteachers and teachers were asked to provide life histories as part of this study. A number of consistent themes emerged: their own teachers had provided role models for them when deciding on a career; teacher training college had been an enjoyable experience though a strict one with much emphasis on discipline; teaching was still, generally, an enjoyable career but much more difficult now and as such teachers received less respect from children and the community; and that for many teachers working in the classroom was merely a stepping stone to further academic study or employment in the educational administration.

To gain some idea of how teachers view their work we asked them about the advantages and disadvantages of the job. Below is a table summarising a selection of responses.

Advantages and disadvantages of teaching as a career: teacher responses

Advantages	Disadvantages
salary is good	behaviour of parents
short hours	lazy children
increase one's own knowledge	distance to work
good preparation for raising a family continuous assessment	work load e.g. marking,
develops social/communicative skills	low respect
stepping stone	few resources
feeling of doing good	

MA, who now teaches at the Specialist Teacher's College (STC) primary school in Winneba voices the views of many interviewed when describing her early life as a young teacher:

MA: *"When I started teaching at first life was so easy because then the cost of living wasn't so high [late 1970]. When you were posted to a village you were given many gifts by the parents and they regarded you as a teacher. They were looking up to you for everything, especially when you got yourself involved in their everyday life, like church activities. They also showed you respect and helped you in many ways. But nobody cares about anybody. You only to teach and come home with nothing. At times some parents, who call themselves educated, misbehave towards teachers who try to correct their children who are notoriously causing trouble in the classroom, and so I am losing interest completely in the job, unlike the early years when I was so eager to teach until I die. This time things have changed".*

As teachers are called upon to become professional in their work it is possible that one can lose sight of the important social role teachers play in a country like Ghana. Enhancing the standing of teachers in society may be as worthwhile an aim as improving their ability to teach mathematics or develop assessment procedures. Again it is a matter of giving more attention to cultural issues.

Earlier we referred to the importance of hierarchy and learning from ones elders and betters. Expansion of the education system has led to a situation where today's children can more easily 'overtake' their teachers.

EO: *"...the situation has gone bad because children feel that after the JSS they get into the SSS and straight into the university while the teacher remains a "common teacher" and this complacency makes them not learn. They end up bragging. Pupils of the old system respected the teachers and learned hard because they know they had to go through all the stages the teacher had gone through..." (Tamale teacher)*

One major "improvement" has been a lessening in the number of unqualified pupil teachers working in remote primary schools (though the phasing out of these teachers has often left no one to replace them) with most schools now having trained and experienced staff (see the appendices for the life history of one pupil teacher).

When asked about what makes a good teacher, ZA, a headteacher of Choggu Primary School in Tamale, had no hesitation:

ZA: *"Punctual, always with the children, doesn't waste instructional time...is dedicated".*

During the research we came across many examples of such teachers who showed resilience and resourcefulness in not only becoming a teacher (often against prevailing social norms) but in managing to make something of the job.

VC, a newly qualified teacher, at Esseukyr Primary School, outside Winneba talked at length about her struggle to enter the profession. Many other women teachers referred to similar obstacles and showed equal courage and determination. Below is a fascinating extract from VC's life history:

VC: *"My mother said, so far you have brought forth [she had a baby son] and so you must go on bringing forth. You shouldn't go to any training college. I said, Ma, one day you will die and father will die, so who will care for me? She said your father will, so don't worry. When she said this, three months after my father returned from abroad, I told him I wanted to go with him to the Belgian Congo. My mother said, No! Your father is wicked! When you go he will let you marry there. You won't come to see me any more. So don't go. So when my father had my passport and everything the day before that time, my mother asked me to dodge. So I went out and when I came back my father had left. So I told my mother I was going to training college. She said no, but I didn't mind her.*

I told my husband I wanted to go to training college so he said Okay you can go. So the two of us planned. I bought my things, packed my things and my mother didn't know anything about it. I was having my own room, so I arranged with the driver he shouldn't' blow the horn. It was dawn so when he came, I put all my things in the car, made my door ajar and put money under the pillow of my son. I then went with the driver. I wrote on paper that my mother should not ask of me. She should take care of the child. When he dies she can bury him. If he doesn't die I would come and take him. So I went. By that time we were given allowance, so I kept all my allowances. I had 73 pounds and so during the holidays, I came home and gave the money to my mother and she said No! You went and moved about with men and they've given you this money and you want to clean yourself. I said not, I am at the training college".

Life at the training college was for many student teachers hard but enjoyable. RA, now teaching at Tamale, remembers carrying water for $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles each day and a colleague, EO remembers life at the college being a little like a prison, "but some of us managed to be self-disciplined". Female tutors at the colleges provided young women students with role models, AD of STC primary, recalling one, a Miss A who:

AD: *"encouraged women to keep abreast with the men rather than wasting our time plaiting our hair".*

MA, went to a Roman Catholic College:

MA: *"The sisters were so strict. Once it was visiting time and my mother came with a bag full of food but because she was late and visiting time was over, the sister did not allow me to collect the food from my mother (who was standing by the gate) and so all I could do was watch my mother with the food. I went back to the dormitory and wept".*

Upon graduation many young teachers found life as a teacher difficult, particularly if posted to a rural area. RD, now teaching at Pomadze Primary School, was posted to the rural village and went there as a single mother:

RD: *"I was taking care of the child myself so it got to a time when I grew very lean because I was doing a lot of work without resting.*

And how old was he when you took him in the classroom?

He was about 5 months old.

How did you manage with your child in the classroom?

I used to send a mat to school so when he wanted to sleep he could".

The natural shyness of many Ghanaians, particularly the men, had to be overcome. DA, now a headteacher of a Winneba school, and still quietly spoken feels he has overcome his reticence:

DA: *"Wherever I am I can now fit in because when I am asked to do anything I don't' feel shy – I try to be vocal and do what I can. Formerly, I could not even open my mouth to talk but teaching children has made me what I am. Now I am free with everybody – I can talk and discuss things because of my profession".*

Many teachers found ways to cope, often in situations of severe stringency. AD, of Winneba began her career as both classteacher of two classes and headmistress of a small, rural primary school:

AD: *"So what I normally did was that on Mondays, I combined the two classes and taught them English and Math. Then on Wednesdays, I separated them and gave them individual work to do whilst I went round to supervise. After that I collected and marked".*

The women teachers interviewed have all taught in a number of schools, some spending as little as a year in one school. Whether because of a husband's career move or because of the Ministry of Education trying to solve a problem of teacher shortage in particular areas, teachers appear highly mobile as a professional group. A M-T, of the Catholic Girls school, in Winneba lists six primary schools where she has worked with AP, headteacher of AME Zion school in the same town, believing it is the desire of

teachers to be upgraded as a major reason for high levels of teacher turnover. The Ghana Education Service offers teachers opportunities to further their own careers whilst remaining on the payroll (given the likely difficulties funding future reform programmes this allowance may be removed). A significant number of women teachers expressed a desire to move on and up and out of teaching.

A trio of women teachers from Pomadze primary school were busy taking or re-taking G.C.E. 'O' levels in the evenings. AP, the headteacher of AME Zion school, Winneba views the situation slightly differently:

AP: *"The job [teaching] is such that you are highly respected even if in these days respect is a bit lower than before. It makes you happy to learn that most of the big men in the Government and other big jobs were teachers before they went there and for the mere fact that they used teaching as a stepping stone makes the work important".*

6.6.3 Experiences of being a schoolchild

A consistent feature of the child's view of schooling is the positive value accorded an education. In spite of all the difficulties encountered by children in getting to and remaining at school, most continue to believe it to be worthwhile. At a focus group discussion amongst girls of the JSS serving Laribanga village one said:

> "I will not want anybody to cheat me and I will like to be able to read and write my own letters. If I am lucky I will get work to do". (Focus group, JSS girls, Laribanga)

Being able to read and write for illiterate family members, 'taking delight' in reading a book for someone else, being able to read so that, "no one can bluff me" are a few of the reasons put forward by girls for continuing with school. Three class six girls from the STC school in Winneba gave these reasons for wanting to complete their education:

1st girl: *I want to finish school so that if I am asked to read in future I can read well.*

2nd girl: *I want to finish my education because if I don't' finish it, one day they will come and ask me something in English and I cannot answer them.*

3rd girl: *I want to finish school that if one day my friend sees me, she will not see me carrying fish or doing an odd job. (Focus group P6 girls STC primary school, Winneba)*

Probably the most imaginative reason for learning to read was given by a Gyahadze parent, EA:

EA: *"...if you are illiterate a notice of your arrest may be served but because you can't read you can't run away and your arrest will be effected".*

Schooling is also perceived as a worthwhile social investment. EA again:

EA: *"It takes less time as an educated girl to make progress. It is easy for a well educated woman to get employment and she is likely to get a well-educated man to marry as marriage is the ultimate aim of every woman".*

If schooling is valued for many the experience is one of difficulty, trial and error. A number of women teachers described nights as a child doing homework:

LA: *"If you are on your homework and you parents are not educated you can't get any help". (Teacher, ACM Primary school, Winneba)*

"Coping up" with the demands of an overly academic curriculum is for many children a major hurdle. A number of the drop-outs felt like MD of Gyahadze, that schools had failed them:

MD: *"It wasn't my fault that I dropped out. The fact is I couldn't cope up with school work and I felt that it was simply a waste of money to remain in school. I believe stopping to learn how to sew is better than remaining in school".*

VN, another drop out from the same village expressed a similar sentiment:

"The fact is that I was not doing well and I felt I was wasting my father's money. I was promoted to JSS 3 but I did not get there before dropping out. Indeed I couldn't grasp whatever I was taught in school. I knew that my father had a sewing machine at home so I told him to let me stop and learn how to sew...even though I was regular at school, I couldn't cope with the academic work. I did my best but I couldn't make it".

For MN, a drop out from the STC primary school, Winneba it wasn't the academic curriculum or punishment that created difficulties:

MN: *"I had a blurred vision. I told my mother who told me I was lying and she insulted me so I stopped".*

Talking with girls who have dropped out of school we can see that for many it isn't a sudden event. Both MN and VN had revealed problems with their school work, something that should have been picked up by teachers, particularly given the introduction of continuous assessment and cumulative record keeping. A difficulty for teachers seems to be the perceived purpose of these activities. Rather than being seen as indicators of a child's strengths and weaknesses they are viewed as administrative chores to be completed when time allows.

If MN and VN were children 'at risk', the child who repeats a year of schooling also presents warning indications of possible drop out.

AA who dropped out of Pomadze school should have been assisted much earlier in her school career:

AA: *"I stopped in class one and came back to class three and continued to class four. I then left to my Daddy's place. I then came back to repeat class four and continued to class five. It was in class five, I dropped out".*

A repeater child, is also viewed negatively by teachers:

HB: *"I suspect he is coming and going again. So you don't take them serious. But I don't blame the children rather it's the parents who seem not to know the value of education". (Headteacher, Esseukyr Primary School)*

For this teacher education is more product than process, the weak child being a family rather than school "problem".

Interestingly when enquiring about drop out girls fellow pupils indicated they knew much more about why their peers left school than their teachers. For many girls life outside school is hard. AD, a teacher at STC Primary School, Winneba, knew of one child, aged fourteen who had fallen by the wayside in form two of JSS:

AD: *"I normally meet her at the beach carrying her baby and looking for fish to sell. She is worse off. She was in dirty cloth".*

Selling iced water, oranges or 'kenkey' seemed the lot of most Winneba school children no longer in school.

Though pregnancy was raised as an issue by a number of teachers and elder members of the community there appears less evidence that it is a major cause of female drop-out. We encountered only one incident of sexual harassment.

A parent of G who had left school a year previously gave this account of the circumstances leading to her daughter's dropping out. The account also says something about who is seen to be at fault, the boy or girl, when an assault occurs:

Auntie A: *"She was OK and going on well at school but unfortunately was having a series of problems. The headteacher called me several times complaining about petty petty issues. He once said that G used to come to school very early to open the doors and windows but no longer did that."*

However, an incident occurred one evening when she decided to go and buy kenkey to eat. On the way a boy (whose mother is a nurse) grabbed her and she screamed until he threw her in the bush. She even lost a slipper, but I didn't know of this. I normally get into my room [arrive home] by 8.00pm. G also didn't tell me until a co-tenant asked whether I didn't hear what had happened the previous night.

Excessive child labour was also cited by a number of teachers as a cause of poor school performance:

HE: *"Sometimes you find one out of ten girls always sleeping in class so when you ask why you find the child is tasked at home". (Headteacher Catholic Girls Primary School, Winneba)*

Parents often request children to help them trade on market days. CM, a Pomadze teacher, noted that on Mondays and Thursdays many of her girls in her P3 class were absent because of market day:

CM: *"...you will see even the little ones selling".*

The problem of teachers using children for labour during school time was mentioned to us by a parent, EA from Gyahadze:

EA: *"Some teachers, however, take undue advantage of permission to use the children's labour in working for people for a fee and they neglect their classroom work".*

Conversing with children in focus groups also gave rise to a feature of school life that mirrors cultural attitudes outside the classroom.

Excelling or doing well at a particular thing is viewed suspiciously by some, particularly peers of whoever has merited attention. A M-T an older teacher at the Catholic School in Winneba and a successful and well-liked teacher recalled that at her convent school:

A M-T: *"The sisters liked me because I was very clever in school. Even the girls were jealous of me and said I was a witch because of the way I studied".*

A Ghanaian colleague told us that this is sometimes called the "PhD factor" – "pull him down", manifested at teachers' college and university by the ritual of 'ponding' in

which successful students are ceremoniously dunked into a nearby pond. This attitude may well reflect the essential communal nature of society; individual betterment being viewed with suspicion.

One surprising finding from the research is the prevalence of "skuul mama" – the over-age girl who because of late entry or repeating finds herself studying alongside much younger classmates. It was a focus group of girls who initially drew our attention to this phenomenon:

> *"Some girls also grow faster than their mates. For instance, in class six we have a girl who is far older than the others and when you see her the others choose make fun of her and call her 'skuul mama' which goes a long way to discourage girls", (Focus group of P6 STC Winneba girls)*

At Gyahadze Primary School the focus group of class six girls (who should have been eleven or twelve years of age) told us:

> *"My name is EA, I am aged fifteen..."*
> *"I am GM, aged 15..."*
> *"My name is MA, age 13..."*
> *"I am SE, I am 12 years of age". (Focus group P6 girls, Gyahadze)*

These "too old for the class" girls are often weak academically, mature for their age, and prone to teasing from their peers. GO, whose aunt earlier told of her sexual harassment, remembers entering class four aged sixteen and though she enjoyed school found relations between her aunt and the school authorities deteriorating:

GO: *"My mother was called several times for minor issues and it became unbearable to me so I decided and told my mother and aunt I will stop schooling".*

VC, a teacher at Esseukyr Primary School recalls that when she was in class six she was the only girl of the correct class age:

VC: *"In fact I was young when I got to class six. Even I wasn't having breast. I was so sorry that I wasn't having breast so they asked me to touch mine with theirs so that I got breast. So I was doing that every morning but nothing was happening until I was at the age of seventeen".*

Talking with teachers about how best to educate and counsel such girls it became apparent that even in a country renowned for its special needs training for teachers, little has been done to remedy this situation.

When the girls in school were asked about their future career a number mentioned becoming an air hostess, a nurse or teacher.

Very few of the girls aspired to a university education or a profession considered the preserve of men.

AA, a Gyahadze village parent, considered that:

AA: *"girls can become nurses or teachers among others [jobs] which are suitable for females".*

Of the girls themselves one or two mentioned that doctors, nurses and women teachers provided them with positive role models, though three JSS girls from Tamale thought that:

> *"the men teachers are better than the women. The women are lazy". (Focus group, Tamale)*

The increasing problem of graduate unemployment has also meant that taking the more academic route into the sixth form instead of post-secondary entry to teachers' college or nursing school is a more risky option for many girls and their parents.

The life histories of the women teachers are an indication too that for many women the struggle has been to persuade parents and community members of the benefits of remaining longer in school. Once persuaded, and in many cases encouraged by the family, the young woman is under quite a lot of pressure to leave with some prospect of employment.

Talking with women who have managed to pursue a teaching career and simultaneously maintain a family life we are struck time and time again by the courage, determination and good humour of women growing up in Ghana.

The younger generation of schoolgirls show all the resilience of their older sisters and are an optimistic aspect of life in this fast changing and precarious society.

7 Concluding Reflections and Policy Implications

In this study we have attempted to do three things: first to provide an argument for acknowledging and using the cultural dimension in educational development, second to put the case for a culturally more appropriate research methodology; and third to address the issue of access and gender in schooling within a cultural framework.

The argument for taking more account of cultural issues in education and development is now gathering pace, particularly amongst those dissatisfied with economic-centred models of change in developing country settings. Though the concept of culture is far from simple it does seem possible to arrive at a working definition which views the concept as both about what people think and do and how we, as educators or development people, describe and evaluate those beliefs and actions. The time is now past when culture was viewed as something 'they' did in exotic climates, it now being concerned with issues of relationships (e.g. with time, the environment, power and hierarchy) maintained and changing amongst people and agencies involved in the social domains of the economy, home and the school.

The case for a more culturally-appropriate research methodology has also been well put: the debate moving on from crude debates about quantitative or qualitative approaches to an examination of methods of social enquiry that take greater account of the cultural nature of that investigation.

One of the aims of this study was to demonstrate a case for according more weight to the use of biographical and life history methods in educational research. In doing so the researcher is faced with maintaining two parallel sets of tensions – first in the balance that needs to be struck between the individual and the contextually-situated nature of individual experiences and second in the balance between the subjective and objective.

In the description and analysis of the study's findings an attempt was made to keep in check these sets of tensions with 'objective' contextual material providing breadth and setting contrasted with the 'subjective' testimonies drawn from individual life histories.

In taking this approach we are emphasising two dimensions of cultural importance: that the teachers' and girl pupils' life histories be told in their own words (and that these 'voices' are given 'space' in the text) and that, as far as possible, be embedded in genealogies of context. If space had permitted we would have liked to have provided room for full life histories of selected individuals. As it is we have attempted to draw out of the experiences common and shared concerns which should be of use to educationists and aid personnel interested in learning from the grassroots what is and what could be.

In focusing upon the problems of access to and dropping-out of school by young women and girls in one national setting, this study provides a good opportunity for us to gain a greater understanding of the cultural nature of both problem and solution.

In the first domain of the home a picture was painted of a society shaped by matters of kinship, descent, and the extended family. The practice of fostering and its impact on educational opportunities for young girls was identified as one area of particular importance. The work expected of a child (girls being required to take a larger share) in the home was also identified as a barrier to achieving greater participation of young people in schooling. Attention was also paid to the cultural values inculcated in the child: godliness, obedience, humility, hospitality, gratitude and national pride, and the effect, particularly of obedience and humility towards elders, upon the schooling of girls in a Western-type education system.

Finally, we looked briefly at the major changes occurring within the Ghanaian family e.g. the re-structuring of authority patterns within the home, the changing role of women within society and the likely impact these might have on the girl-child's life at school.

The Northern and Southern settings for the two case studies provided some evidence for the view that support for schooling was generally strong in the South and more so in urban than rural settings. Opportunities for women to play a greater part in the social and economic life of the nation had led, paradoxically, to a situation where urban extended families looked to poorer relatives in the rural villages to provide help in the home.

Three issues emerged as significant when women teachers and girls talked about growing up, namely the traditional and widely-held attitudes concerning what girls and women could and could not do; the expectations of girls vis-à-vis those of boys; and for girls the importance of successful women as role models. The support offered a girl whilst in school by members of the extended family and the problems young women face at times of family break-up provide food for thought particularly when considering the targeting of aid towards those most in need. Identifying the child-at-risk **as well as** the drop out would follow with the necessity for closer collaboration between professionals working within the social development and educational arenas.

The experiences of girls and young women give testimony to these changes, with poverty and family break up on the one hand; and on the other, for the successful woman teacher support from the father being factors that determine their futures.

The second domain – the economic described the situation of poverty in Ghana from a macro and micro perspective, arguing that economic policies such as structural adjustment in the former create an array of 'winners' and 'losers' in the latter. The

child-at-risk portrayed in our first section more often as not resides within an economically vulnerable household where relative lack of wealth is contingent upon location, gender, age and health.

The relationship between poverty and schooling is particularly striking within this nation setting with evidence that structural adjustment and 'dash for growth' economic strategies provide, 'a strong and positive relationship' between enrolment and poverty status. There is also surprising support for private education (particularly in the capital) and evidence that the mean parental expense of educating girls is significantly higher than that for boys at both primary and secondary levels.

The experience of poverty of those interviewed fell into two broad categories: the first termed, 'the culture of power' – a critical understanding of current and past circumstances that bring about poverty, and the second, the 'power of culture' – in which individuals and communities speak the language of possibility and coping strategies.

In the first case, it is clear that many girls are put at risk economically for very small amounts of money and that some parents, particularly fathers, are abrogating their responsibilities in supporting their daughters, leaving the girls themselves to juggle between attending school and becoming the family breadwinner. The value women teachers put upon the financial sacrifices of their family in supporting them through school and college indicates the importance in differentiating between willingness and ability to pay for an offspring's schooling.

A consequence of the liberalisation of the economy and an encouragement of the free market has been the realisation by many family members that being out of school is more profitable for their child than being in. This has serious implications for those involved in improving the quality of Basic Education, with parents more conscious of schools providing 'value for money' and more effective vocationally-orientated training.

A curious view to emerge from the experiences of older and younger females is the belief that economically times are much harder now. It would appear that though, on a macro-scale, Ghana experienced severe economic depression in the late 1970's and 1980's, many feel that the quality of schooling remained high with parents shielded from the financial burdens faced by parents currently.

In terms of ways forward the research confirms the view that whereas in the past

schooling was viewed as "free" parents today are much more discriminating in their attitude to sending their children to school, many taking the view that 'failure' in examination or the incidence of pregnancy "wastes" precious economic resources.

Solutions to help those in financial difficulty include reducing school fees for the very poor, payment of fees in instalments, and recognition that many girls can finance their own education given flexibility in school hours and curriculum.

A re-examination of the relationship between the world of the school and the world of work is necessary therefore and needs to take account of the experiences of those who manage to succeed through school often as a result of their own resilience and resourcefulness.

The world of school made up our third domain. Here we found a situation where many of the core cultural values described earlier translated into how the teacher behaves and how he or she expects the children to learn. Knowledge valued for its own sake, reliance upon question and answer and rote learning, and fluctuations in the quality of educational provision, particularly between the North and the South of the country, shape the educational experiences of most children.

A major issue seems to be the amount of time on task a child experiences with many children spending significant periods of the school day doing nothing and learning very little. The rhetoric of educational reform needs to be placed alongside the lack of attention (even in the rhetoric) to issues of language policy and teaching – learning methodology.

The women and girls interviewed, once again showed an optimism and sense of realism in looking for ways forward. These tended to be grouped into two broad areas: first ways in which the community can continue to help schools with provision of furniture, lunch-time snacks for children, housing for teachers, and secondly arrangements made within the school to improve the teaching–learning process. Here the 'voices' of the children need to be listened to much more with sensible suggestions advocating such things as reading clubs and class libraries.

The life of the teacher is generally a sorry one with many still enjoying their career but believing that it was much more difficult now with teachers receiving less respect from the children and the community and for many seeing teaching as a stepping stone to a better paid and higher status occupation.

For children, life at school is worthwhile in terms of potential social investment but an experience fraught with difficulty and disappointment. Heavy emphasis upon punishment, the equation of success with the academic, and a belief that education is given to rather than being drawn out of a child characterises the culture of many schools.

The 'too old for the class' girls and those with special needs are most at risk with learning difficulties being see as the responsibility of the child rather than the school or the teacher.

In terms of policy implications this research indicates that much more needs to be done in framing both problem and solution within a holistic framework that takes account of the domains of home, economy and school. The chart below gives a number of examples of ways forward which, though located in a particular domain, should be viewed within the larger world of the child's life.

Policy Implications

Home	Economy	School
That home life for many schoolgirls is shaped by matters of kinship, descent and the extended family. The practice of fostering and the work expected of many girls has implications for the development of compulsory schooling. That recognition be given to the cultural values inculcated in the child at home. Obedience and deference to elders, for example, will have implications for those keen to develop more child-centred teaching methods. That the situation of rural girls be accorded particular attention e.g. in the development of non-formal provision for girls working as domestic servants in urban homes. That attitudes towards the education of girls still raises questions of parental awareness of the benefits of schooling, the necessity of examining the support available for poor families to send girls to school, and the broader question of the amount and flexibility of schooling provided.	That the concept of the 'Girl Child' be extended to include the 'Girl Child at Risk'. It is clear that 'drop-out' is not an event but a process and often involves very small amounts of money. The question of 'safety net' provision at national and local level needs to accompany policies to increase participation in schooling. That macro economic policies such as structural adjustment create an array of 'winners' and 'losers', particularly at the micro level of extended family. The encouragement of the free market has also led to a realization for many that being out of school is more profitable for their child than being in. That in many poor homes the sole breadwinner is the girl-child at school. Recognition of this needs to be accompanied by more flexible school time tabling and a re-appraisal of vocational training. That the introduction of school fees has meant that 'success' is now a question of a return on an investment. The 'culture of failure' in many schools with excessive and poorly administered assessment procedures can have major consequences for the under-achieving child. That solutions to these problems lie in both hands of policy-makers and in the creative way many girls and young teachers juggle the relationship between the world of school and the world of work.	That schools are still places where many children spend significant periods of time doing nothing and learning very little. Many of the cultural core values described earlier translate into how the teacher behaves and how he or she expects the child to learn. That little attention is paid to the 'culture of the classroom' where issues of attitude to knowledge, teaching methodology, and language policy constrain efforts to implement reform That the life of the teacher is still very hard with many perceiving their profession as low status. Improving the position of teacher requires not only better conditions of service but the development of professional practices within schools. Such a task falls to the head teacher well supported by district education offices. That the experiences of the child in school be accorded more importance. The frequency of punishment, support in the learning of literacy and numeracy, and the existence of successful women teachers as role models for girls and boys are areas mentioned by many children. We need to listen to what the young people are telling us about their educational experiences and the solutions provided by them.

For those charged with improving the educational system it would seem important to look not just at an array of inputs that need putting into the system or the outputs as measured by examination scores but to giving greater priority to the day-to-day processes of teaching; to examine ways in which the teacher can be better supported in what he or she tries to achieve. Giving more attention to the cultural dimension of being a teacher will result in considering such issues as the social standing of the profession,

the interface between the teacher's life in the classroom and in the community, and in enhancing the career path of those who enter the profession. The importance of successful women as role models to young female pupils and the negative stereotyping of some women within the profession are also matters of concern.

Finally, much more importance needs to be accorded to the voices of those most affected by educational reform. The women and girls interviewed in this study are not passive recipients of Government or Donor initiative but resourceful individuals able to provide ideas and solutions grounded in the realities of their daily lives. It is up to us to listen.

APPENDIX 1 –

TRANSCRIPTS OF THREE LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEWS WITH GIRL DROP OUTS

Interview with Ayishetu Hassan (Drop Out, Laribanga)

Ayishetu Hassan is a girl of about 13 years. When she was invited for the interview, she refused and even started running away. When she was caught, I explained what I was doing and why I was doing it. Ayishetu agreed to have the interview. She was afraid but soon got over it when we started. On the tape she seemed to have spent about 30 minutes but in reality, the interview with Ayishetu was over an hour. I had to occasionally press my pause button in order not to waste the tape. She was pleased with herself, manifested in smiles when it was over. The interview was in Kamara, her mother tongue. This was conducted in July, 1995.

Q: Where were you born?
A: Laribanga.
Q: Where did you grow up?
A: Laribanga.
Q: Are you the eldest, youngest or somewhere in the middle among you mother's children?
A: I am not the eldest.
Q: How many are you?
A: We are eight.
Q: How many are older than you?
A: Four.
Q: Do they attend school?
A: No, they go for Islamic instructions.
Q: Are you the eldest among the girls?
A: No, we are two girls.
Q: What kind of work do you do at home?
A: Fetching of water, washing dishes and fetching firewood.
Q: What work do your parents do?
A: They are farmers.
Q: Do you have any other child staying with you?
A: Yes, we have an aunt's child staying with us.
Q: Who is older?
A: She is.
Q: Are there days that you felt very unhappy?
A: Yes.
Q: What made you unhappy on such days?
A: They blame me quite often saying I was not hardworking.
Q: What about happy moments?
A: When I was praised.
Q: Where did you start your schooling?
A: In Laribanga.
Q: What did you like about school?
A: I didn't like school at all.
Q: What were your thoughts when you were in school?
A: Nothing.
Q: What and how did you feel? Did you really not like school?
A: No.
Q: Were your school fees being paid?
A: No.
Q: Did you get any help from your parents?
A: No.
Q: Why did you drop out of school?

A: Nothing. I don't have any specified reasons.
Q: Were there other girls like you who dropped out of school while you were there?
A: Yes.
Q: Now, tell me why you stopped going to school.
A: I was asked to pay some money and when I told my parents about it, they told me they didn't have any money to pay so I stopped.
Q: Did the teachers worry you too much about the fees?
A: Yes.
Q: How did you feel about that?
A: I felt ashamed and that was why I left.
Q: What else worried you so much that you had to leave school?
A: Nothing.
Q: Do you feel you could make it in school?
A: No, I was not good in class.
Q: Was that another reason for leaving school?
A: Yes.
Q: Did you think of any career while you were in school? Did you feel like doing some job after school?
A: I never thought of that.
Q: Were there any drop outs when you were in school?
A: Yes.
Q: Why did they drop out?
A: Some of the good pupils teased the weaker ones in class.
Q: Will you go if we talk to you teacher to warn all who laugh at pupils like you?
A: Yes, I will go back to school.
Q: Considering your experience, what do you think should be done to help girls like you stay in school?
A: Pupils should be given school dresses and sandals for school.
Q: Suppose you have your dresses and your school fees paid, will you go to school even if you are laughed at?
A: Yes.
Q: What do you think you parents should do to help you stay in school?
A: They should give me money.
Q: What do you need money for?
A: To send to school (chop money).
Q: Do you imply that you need food?
A: Yes.
Q: Have you heard of the government?
A: No.
Q: What do you think school authorities should do to help you in school?
A: Nothing. I don't think they can do anything.
Q: Were your parents happy that you went to school?
A: They were happy about it.
Q: What support did they offer you when you were in school?
A: They gave me food when I return from school.
Q: So why did you then stop going to school?
A: Nothing.

N.B. Although the interview doesn't seem long, it took me over one hour to reach this point.

Q: Do you know any drop outs?
A: No.
Q: What about girls who stopped going to school at the same time with you? Do you know any?
A: Yes, she is Sadia.
Q: Do you know why she dropped out?

A: No, I know she was sent to Damongo.
Q: What work do you do now that you have stopped going to school?
A: Going for water, washing dishes, going to market and fetching firewood (*) as going to the farm.
Q: Could you not have been in school whilst doing what you do?
A: No.
Q: So it was not only because your parents couldn't pay the school fees that you stopped going to school?
A: Yes, that was the only reason.
Q: Suppose you had someone to pay you school fees would you continue education?
A: No.
Q: Why will you not go to school despite getting a sponsor?
A: I am not intelligent and that makes me feel shy, I think.
Q: You feel you are not intelligent but we feel you are, why will you not like to go back to school?
A: I feel my friends will laugh at me for not knowing anything.
Q: Do clever children laugh at the less brighter ones in your school?
A: No, not always.
Q: What makes you think like this?
A: Even if I get back my friends will have to help me.
Q: And don't you think they can help till you are also good?
A: I think so.
Q: So why won't you go?
A: It's because they will laugh at me.

Interview with Cynthia Alex – Drop Out

Cynthia is a young woman of about 20 years. She has a child though unmarried. She is an apprentice in hair dressing. The interview with Cynthia was in another drop out's house close to hers. She was very willing to talk to me about herself. The interview was conducted in May, 1995.

Q: Where were you born?
A: Navrongo.
Q: Did you grow up there?
A: No, I grew up here in Tamale.
Q: Are you the eldest of your family?
A: No, but the eldest girl.
Q: What kind of jobs did you do as a child?
A: I cooked, cleaned dishes, swept the compound and went for water.
Q: What work did your father and mother do?
A: My father worked with Rural Development. My mother was a house wife.
Q: Did you live with any relatives?
A: No, just our parents and us.
Q: Do you remember any experiences of your childhood days? They could either be good or bad circumstances.
A: I don't remember anything.
Q: Do you remember anything that made you sad or happy when you were a child?
A: I use to be always happy.
Q: Did you never become sad?
A: Only when I was beaten but that never lasted.
Q: Where did you start your schooling?
A: St Gabriel's in Tamale.
Q: What do you remember about your primary school? Did you find the primary school interesting?
A: Yes.
Q: Why was it interesting?
A: Usually after school during break, we played with our friends and this made us feel like going to school always.
Q: Was it only because of playing with your friends that you liked to go to school?
A: The teachers were also nice to us.
Q: Were your parents supportive when you were in school?
A: Yes.
Q: What did they do?
A: They bought my school uniforms, sandals, books and everything that I needed to make me happy.
Q: Did they do anything other than buying things for you? Did they advise you?
A: Yes, anytime I didn't feel like going to school, they would advise me and encourage me to go to school.
Q: Were there girls in your class?
A: Yes, the girls were even more than the boys.
Q: Do you remember all the girls finishing primary six?
A: I remember 4 dropped.
Q: Do you know why they dropped?
A: The complained of school fees.
Q: Was paying school fees a problem? I guess it was not too much.
A: No, it was not such a big problem but I don't' know why. Some too were not just interested in school.
Q: What are they doing now?
A: They have learnt hair dressing and sewing. They have their own workshops. Some are married and selling in the market.
Q: Which school did you go to after the primary school?
A: Anglican Middle.

Q: What kind of job were you thinking of when you were in the middle school?
A: I first wanted to go to the secondary school but my father advised me rather to finish form four (10 years of basic education) and get into the Training College so I dropped that idea.
Q: Why then didn't you go to college.
A: We were the last batch of the old system of form four and somehow our final year exam results was never released.
Q: Did you find out?
A: Yes, I was told they were cancelled.
Q: What, while in form four, did you intend doing in future?
A: I thought of being a teacher as my father advised but because I had no certificate for my basic education, I had not admission into the college so I decided to do hairdressing.
Q: What about your younger brothers and sister?
A: She started day nursery when I left form four.
Q: What did you do while in the house?
A: Nothing special. Just the house chores.

Interview with Cynthia Gabriel – Drop Out

Q: Would you say your responsibilities at home interfered a lot with your school work?
A: No.
Q: How did your parents feel when you wanted to continue your studies after form four? (Basic 10 years of school)
A: My father was very interested and even wanted me to go to secondary school but I refused.
Q: And why did you not want to go to the secondary school?
A: I can't explain that, I just felt like being a teacher and wanted to do my training after form four.
Q: Did you have friends when you were in form school?
A: Yes.
Q: Did they all get through to form four with you?
A: Some dropped out.
Q: What urged you on?
A: I liked to go to school and all that I liked to be was a teacher. Even now I still think of school.
Q: Would you want to go back to school if you got some help?
A: Yes.
Q: Where will you start if you go back to school?
A: At the J.S.S.
Q: How old are you?
A: 20 years.
Q: Will you be willing despite your age to go back to J.S.S.?
A: Certainly.
Q: Are you married?
A: No.
Q: Do you have a child?
A: Yes.
Q: Don't you think it will be difficult to care for the child and at the same time attend school?
A: My mother will take care of my child.
Q: What work do you do?
A: I am a hairdressing apprentice.
Q: How long have you been doing that?
A: 2 years.
Q: After leaving form four, what were you doing till you started learning to do your hairdressing?
A: I was doing nothing because my father had travelled and there was no one to cater for me at school. On his arrival I left for a vocational school hoping I would be a needlework teacher, but it didn't turn out this was because by the time I left that vacancy did not exist anywhere. Anyway I couldn't even finish the vocational school for fear that I was wasting time.
Q: Don't you think you could have established a small business if you finished?
A: No, because I did weaving and there is no demand for our woven cloth. Some of my friends who tried doing that have closed down their shops.
Q: Is that why you left do to hairdressing?
A: Yes.
Q: Who pays for you?
A: My father.
Q: What do you plan doing after completing your course?
A: I intend establishing a hair dressing salon.
Q: How do you cope to finance that?
A: I am counting on my father and if he isn't in the position to help I would have to get a loan.
Q: Have you heard of any association that helps women?

A: No.
Q: Haven't you heard of any association that gives loans to women?
A: I heard of one some time ago, tried to get a loan from them but it hasn't been successful. Not one of those I know who applied got it.
Q: Have you stopped following them for the loan?
A: My father has taken up the issue.
Q: Why do girls drop out of school according to you?
A: Some drop out because there is no one to take care of them, some find husbands, others get pregnant. Some even are forced to marry. many of us didn't foresee that the trend of things in the country would change and thought life would remain as it was – easy and simple.
Q: You talked about your friend stopping school and leaving for Nigeria. Why did she do that?
A: She was forced into marriage and her husband lived in Nigeria. She couldn't make it there. She is back to Ghana.
Q: What work does she do now?
A: She is learning to sew, dressmaking.
Q: Do you know of any policy that is meant to help girls in school?
A: No.
Q: Do you still like to go to school?
A: Formerly no, but now I would say yes.
Q: Why do you think they like to go to school now and yet they are dropping out of school?
A: It is the problem of getting married early.
Q: Do you think female drop out is a nationwide problem?
A: Nationwide.
Q: Do you know anybody who has dropped out from the south?
A: No.
Q: How do you then know it is nationwide?
A: I've heard interviews of such people on the television.
Q: What were some of their reasons for dropping out?
A: Because their parents were unable to take care of them in school.
Q: Did you hear what their plans were?
A: Yes, to do some work, get some money and get back to school.
Q: Suppose you were offered some assistance of a sort, what would you want to do?
A: I would open a hairdressing salon since I've almost completed my apprenticeship.
Q: If it was a loan, would you accept it?
A: Yes.
Q: Is there anything that you would want to add? Are there any other reasons why girls drop out of school or that could be done to help girls stay in school that we haven't talked about?
A: Nothing in particular but parents should be encouraged to look after their children and stop forcing the girls into marriage. If girls want to invest in business, they should be encouraged.
Q: So, would you, if you had the assistance use if for business instead of school?
A: No because school is so important. Other people can't cheat you if you are educated. Even to be an apprentice now they require a bit of schooling so that people are able to read and know the kind of cream to use.
Q: How do you see your progress in such a job?
A: Once can be very efficient by doing her work well and giving a good reception to clients. It has a good future.
Q: Do you think you will still be a hairdresser in the next ten years?
A: I don't intend changing a job but I will try to do something in addition (like doing petty trading).
Q: Do you have anything to add?
A: No, that's all I have to say.

APPENDIX 2 –

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Life Histories: Women Teachers
Interview Schedule (45 minute interviews)

1. Experiences of life as a child:

   Where were you born and grew up?
   Can you tell me something about your position in the family e.g. eldest daughter? Responsibilities?
   Parents life? Occupation?
   Extended family life?
   Memory of a positive/happy experience; difficult/sad time?

2. Experiences of life at primary school:

   Where did you go to school?
   What memories do you have of school?
   What support/encouragement/sacrifices did your parents give with regard to your schooling?
   What factors contributed to your success at school?
   Do you remember girls dropping out of school? Causes? What happened to them?

3. Experiences of life after primary school:

   How much more schooling did you do?
   What career thoughts did you have then?
   What was happening to your siblings?
   Responsibilities at home?
   Parents and family's view of your schooling?
   Girls friends? Did they all follow you through schooling?
   What motivated you at school and home?

4. Experiences of life as a teacher trainee:

   Where did you study?
   What memories do you have of this?
   What was teaching practice like?
   Why did you go into teaching?
   Family's reaction to your training? What were your friends doing?
   What was the education system like then?

5. Experiences of life as a teacher:

   Did you go straight into teaching?
   What memories do you have of your first school job?
   What plans did you have for teaching? Career?
   Was teaching easy for women then?
   Was the life of a teacher very different then?

6. Experiences of life as a teacher now:

   Describe your teaching now.
   What are the good and bad aspects of the job?
   How do you see your career developing?

How does teaching relate to your home and family life?
What will you be doing in ten years time?

7. Views of girls dropping out of school:

(refer to completed questionnaire)
Why do girls drop out?
Can you tell us about on girl's experiences? Causes and what happened to her?
What policies exist to help girls?
Do you think the situation is the same all over Ghana? Is your school typical of schools in this area?
What do you think GES and the District Education Office should do?
Anything you would like to say that we haven't talked about?

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS: Girls in School/Girls out of school

Procedure

1. Select a group of 6 – 8 P6 girls and JSS1 girls. Interview P6 and JSS1 separately.

2. As far as possible have the female class teacher chair the discussion. Girls should be encouraged to discuss the following:

    Is girl drop-outs a problem in this school?
    What are the causes?
    How could the school help?
    How could families and the Community help?
    What happens to the girls who drop out?

3. The teacher should encourage the group to talk about why they don't have problems and who helps them do well at school?

4. 30 – 45 minutes is probably enough time for one discussion.

5. The teacher should decide whether to use the first language or English.

6. The headteacher should of course be kept informed at all times.

7. Refer to the guide on how to conduct Focus Group Interviews and summarise for the teachers.

Other School Data

Data is to be collected from FIVE schools e.g. THREE Primary and TWO JSS.

Schools should be chosen because they have a big problem with drop outs or because they have few problems in this area.

Interview the headteacher.

Interview the PTA chairman and head of school Welfare Committee if it exists.

Check you have enrolment figures and exam results.

Try and visit the school a few times to observe teaching and talk to teachers. Build up a picture of the school.

Note the problems and successes of the school.

Meet with the P6 teacher (s) and suggest class write a short essay on why children drop out of school. Discuss prize for best essays.

Identify with school help girls who have dropped out. Discuss how and where they can be interviewed. Can parents be contacted?

Keep a good record of data collected for each school e.g. who interviewed, follow up visits to be undertaken etc. The following checklist can help:

SCHOOL A

1 Teachers interviewed

Who? 1. 2. 3.
Questionnaire administered?
Interview conducted? Transcribed?
Follow up?

2 Headteacher interviewed

Who?
When?
Follow up?

3 P6/JSS1 Class visited

Focus group interviews
When?
Follow up?
Essay administered? Collected?

4 School PTA Head interviewed

Who?
When?
Follow up?

5 School Observation

When?
Field notes written up?
Follow up?

6 School Enrolment and Exam data

Collected?
Follow up?

Collect anything else of interest

GIRLS OUT OF SCHOOL INTERVIEW DATA

Procedure

Decisions will need to be taken about how to identify drop-out girls and whether it is best to try and interview them individually or as a group. The class teacher might not be the most appropriate person to interview them. I would like to be able to draw up individual profiles of girls.

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